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DUNGEON™

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT

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EDITORIAL

The Heights of Villainy

After several weeks away from my regular DMing duties, I finally got a chance to jump back behind the screen recently, and was immediately reminded why I enjoy D&D so much. I mean, the power, right? Okay, I kid (mostly), but wow, did I have fun. I can partly attribute this to the break, and partly to the ease with which 4th Edition games move, but whatever the cause, it was great to get back in the saddle.

At last week's game, the characters had the opportunity to fight one of the adventure's main villains. He was really tough, the fight was long, and by the end, the players hated this guy. I started to reflect on why the players responded so viscerally to this villain. What about him got under their skins? And I realized that, in this case, I'd used one of my favorite villain tricks to make this particular bad guy more hateful. Several times during the fight, I'd have him pointedly call out one of the heroes on the battlefield. I'd slip into first person mode—something I'm not as prone to do when I'm playing, but much more likely to do as a DM—and I'd point at a character's player, and tell them, "You're next," or something to that effect. Of course, this was most effective when he'd just dropped someone, which happened a few times. Calling the characters out brought the energy up, made the fight memorable, and got me thinking about other ways you can make a boss fight the stuff of legend.

So I polled the D&D Insider staff and got several great ideas:

Bring 'em Back Again. And Again. Bart points out that bringing back a villain who was soundly trounced is great for upping the hate. I couldn't agree more. Like many of the tricks in this list, you don't want to overuse this one. Save it for a villain who was already memorable for another reason, though, and you'll really get under your players' skins. If you do use this trick, do it with a fresh spin. For example, make the death blow from the PCs' first encounter a prominent scar. Or consider upping the villain's power level a second time around. If he was pretty squishy in round 1, make him extra tough the second time around, and give him a new power or two.

Et Tu? Betrayal is a common trope of D&D villains, and one that can be overused. Chris Sims points out that if you betray your PCs too often, they'll come to suspect and resent every NPC you send their way—however innocent their intentions. Save your betrayals, he advises, for a really devastating moment. And only use the trick once or twice in a campaign. If you really pull off a good, unsuspected betrayal, your players will never forget that moment . . . or that villain.

Hit 'em Where it Hurts. Steve points out that the **Ravenloft®** setting had some of the best advice on villains. Ever. "There's a reason why the villain is called 'master.' He's in charge. He's calling the shots. He knows about the heroes through his spies, informants, guards, and scrying. He knows what they're up to and is almost always a step ahead of them. He doesn't wait to be attacked, he carries the fight to the enemy and hits them when they're weak. He doesn't crush them with a single blow but delivers 'the death of a thousand cuts' (because making the players feel helpless and then prolonging their agony is the best)." If every time the characters turn around, a villain has taken something from them—an NPC they cared about, captured a city they'd just left off defending—when they finally get to face him, they won't be able to restrain themselves from bringing the hurt.

Evil is as Evil Does. Few things will get the heroes' backs up like pure, unadulterated callousness. Steve and Chris both pitched this idea, and I couldn't agree more. The simple coup de grace has served me well in the past, and we all seem to agree that a villain who really embraces his own vile nature is one the PCs will be eager to face and destroy.

So next time you're planning a villain for your next campaign, or for your next *Dungeon* submission, keep so me of these ideas in mind. And never be afraid to stare a player in the eye and promise them that they're next on your list.

HEROIC

1–10

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

Menace of the Icy Spire

"MENACE OF THE ICY SPIRE" is a Dungeons & Dragons® adventure for five characters of 2nd level. The adventure is set in the Forgotten Realms® setting near the town of Loudwater in the Gray Vale. This adventure is designed to work well with the sample adventures found in Chapter 1 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*. In particular, this adventure makes an excellent sequel to *Barrow of the Ogre King*, which introduces Loudwater and the surrounding area along with several NPCs who would make ideal patrons for sending the PCs on this adventure. However, it is not necessary for the characters to have visited Loudwater previously.

by Sean Molley

illustrations by Rob Alexander, Ben Wootten and Ron Lemen
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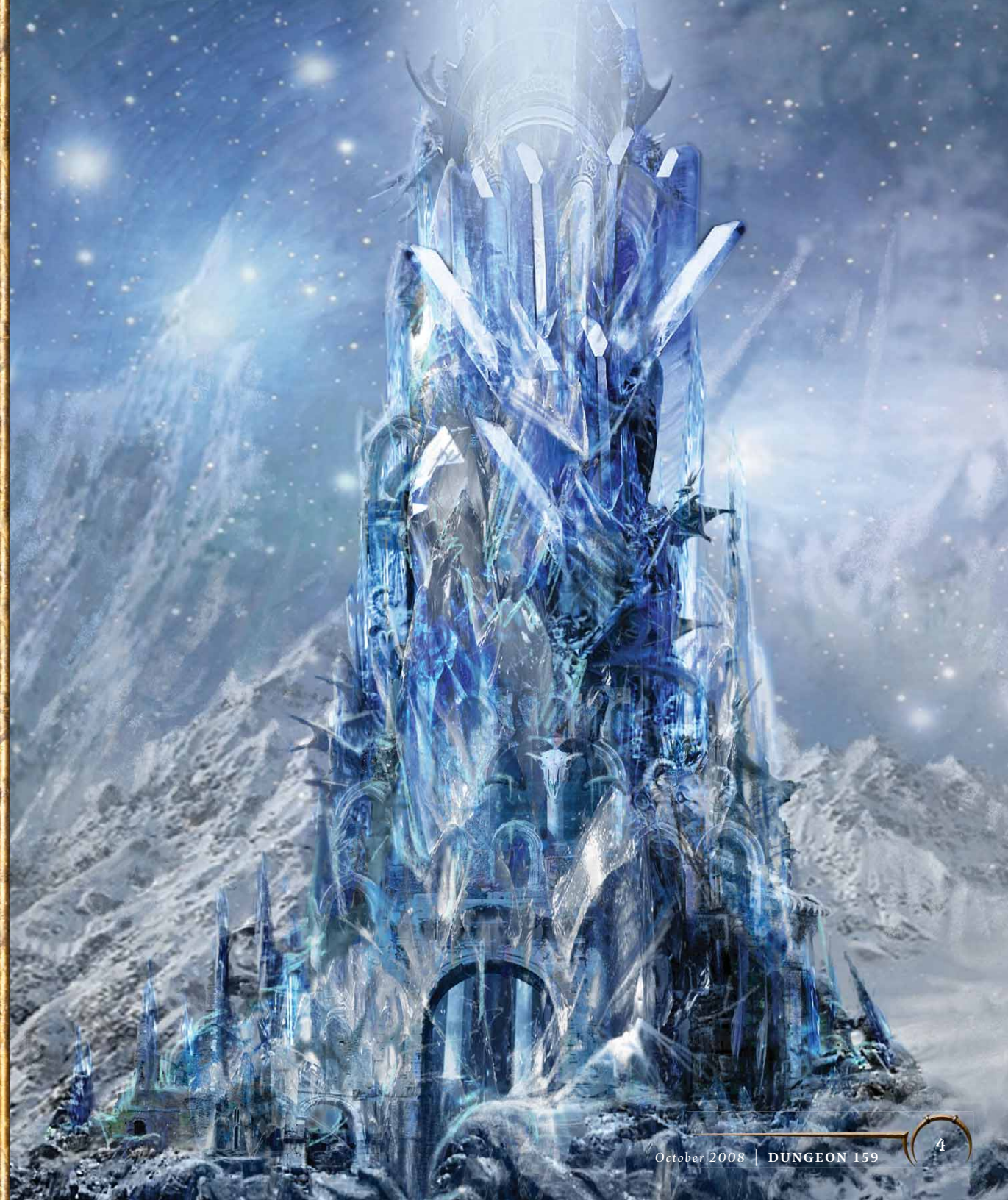


Background

About 30 years ago, a dwarf warlock named Draigdurroch came to the Gray Vale. Draigdurroch was part of a cabal of warlocks, and his particular research dealt with the creation of new types of eldritch pacts. He believed that the Dire Wood contained a particularly potent source of untapped energy—the remains of a failed deity. Thousands of years before the Spellplague, a Netherese city called Karse stood in the area, and the demigod Karsus was its patron. Karsus tried and failed to ascend to full godhood, dying in the process, and his city (along with the rest of the ancient Empire of Netheril) fell not long thereafter. Draigdurroch's research suggested that the petrified remains of Karsus yet lie beneath the forest's heart. Draigdurroch hoped that he could tap into the latent energy that Karsus had accumulated and use it to power his new pact. The dwarf warlock built a tower about a mile outside the Dire Wood and began his experiments in earnest.

Draigdurroch's hunch turned out to be correct. A powerful nexus of magical energy is beneath the heart of the Dire Wood. However, the fey spirits who dwell within the Dire Wood have long been aware of how dangerous the remnants of Karsus could be if the demigod's power fell into the wrong hands. They have appointed themselves as guardians to ensure that no one tampers with the failed deity's resting place. When Draigdurroch's efforts began to bear fruit and the dwarf warlock drew upon the latent echoes of Karsus's power to form a dark pact, the fey approached him and warned him to cease his meddling. The warlock was confident in his powers and ignored the warning. For his temerity, the fey punished him. Draigdurroch was imprisoned within the Feywild and his tower was sealed in a block of magic ice as a warning to others. The fey set a powerful gemstone holding a spirit of winter to act as the keystone holding the icy barrier.

The ritual enacted by the fey was designed to have a limited area of effect—Draigdurroch's tower was encased in ice, but the surrounding lands were not supposed to be affected. Unfortunately, such a powerful spell cannot go unnoticed forever. Draigdurroch's tower contains several small rifts to the Elemental Chaos that he had created as part of his arcane research. Recently, a group of ice warriors discovered one of these rifts when they were drawn by the strength of the cold energy emanating from the gemstone. They have taken up residence in Draigdurroch's tower, finding it a most hospitable environment thanks to the perpetual layer of ice. The warriors have begun to modify the ritual that the fey created, increasing its power and spreading the effects of the magical frost over a larger area. If they are not stopped, a permanent winter will come to the entire Gray Vale.

Adventure Synopsis

This adventure occurs after Midsummer but before the end of Highsun. Over the last several weeks, temperatures in the Gray Vale have been dropping to levels that would not normally occur until after Highharvesttide. Things have not become too dangerous for travelers yet, but to all indications, winter is coming several months early. If that occurs, the crops will freeze and die before they are ready to be harvested, putting the entire area's food supply at risk.

The PCs can find precious little information in Loudwater. However, some local woodsfolk report that the cold temperatures appear to be more pronounced in the area of the Dire Wood. Rumors even tell of blizzards in broad daylight! Some claim it is the work of evil faeries, but the town's leaders believe that a more likely source of the problem is Draigdurroch Tower. No one has seen or heard from Draigdurroch in 30 years, and the tower's cursed history is well known. The PCs can find a reasonably detailed map of the area and set out to investigate the tower.

The adventurers' first challenge is the magically altered weather. The ice warriors have manipulated the magic of the fey gemstone and have created a powerful snowstorm to shroud the area around the tower. The PCs must overcome a skill challenge to navigate the treacherous wintry hazards. Their success or failure on this challenge determines whether they are in a favorable position when they are ambushed by goblins during a break in the storm. These goblins have been frost-touched by the corrupted fey magic, giving them some unusual characteristics.

After defeating the frost goblins and overcoming the storm, the PCs arrive at the tower, which is a three-story structure carved with images of demons and devils (in honor of Draigdurroch's original infernal pact). The cocoon of ice is still intact, so the PCs need to find a way to break through before they can enter the tower. When they do, however, they trigger some of the tower's original defenses, since some of the carvings and statues animate and attack.

Inside the tower, the PCs discover that everything is perfectly preserved, as if the warlock had just stepped out an hour ago. Frost covers every surface, but the furnishings and contents of the tower are intact. The ice warriors attack from all sides in a running battle that spans two floors of the tower.

The PCs must deal not only with the main group of warriors inside the tower, but also with reinforcements who are coming from the Elemental Chaos through small rifts in the fireplaces.

Once the warriors have been dealt with, the PCs can ascend to Draigdurroch's study, where they find his research notes and rituals, along with a few traps that he left to protect his belongings from intruders. Here they discover the truth about the warlock's efforts to tap into the power of the failed deity Karsus. This provides a way for you to introduce the dark pact warlock (from the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*) to your campaign if you are so inclined. The PCs can also learn that Draigdurroch was part of a larger cabal of warlocks, so his research might not have ended when the fey cursed him and sealed the tower.

At the top of the tower, the PCs discover the true source of the unnatural weather. The ritual of winter is feeding on itself and growing more powerful by the day. The only way to stop it is to destroy the gemstone that acts as the focus for the ritual. However, when the adventurers attempt to interfere with the gemstone, its guardian creature emerges and attacks.

On their way back to Loudwater, the PCs encounter weak chillborn zombies, recently animated by the corrupted winter magic. This is an optional encounter that allows you to introduce another adventure location of your own devising for follow-up adventures. It can safely be omitted, or you could move it to the first part of the adventure—either before or after the goblin ambush.

Adventure Hooks

The adventure assumes that the PCs are either based in Loudwater or have come to the town for some reason. The primary hook is that the PCs are asked to investigate the unnatural weather before it becomes a serious problem. The PCs might already be known to some or all the prominent citizens of Loudwater, but even if this is their first visit to the town, they are still the obvious choice to investigate the early onset of winter. For more information about Loudwater, see Chapter One of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*.

The local farmers are petitioning Lady Moonfire, the civic leader of Loudwater, and Brother Griffon, the head of the temple of Silvanus, to find out what's going on. Suspicion naturally fell upon evil magic, as it usually does in these sorts of cases, which led to the involvement of Curuvar the Brazen, Loudwater's resident wizard. Any or all these three could ask or hire the PCs to help.

Lady Moonfire: As Loudwater's civic leader, the half-elf Lady Moonfire is responsible for the town's protection. She has been getting an earful from the local farmers, who are concerned about the early onset of winter. If the harvest fails, then the entire Gray Vale will have a lean winter.

Read the following:

"We would be in your debt if you find the source of this unnatural winter," says Lady Moonfire. "If things continue as they have, the crops will die in the fields and Loudwater's next Deadwinter Day will be a lot more than symbolic. I suggest you start by investigating Draigdurroch Tower, near the Dire Wood. Considering the tower's history, I can't imagine it's just a coincidence. I'm sure that Curuvar can tell you more. Honestly, 30 years is far too long to wait—someone should explore that tower anyway. I'm sure it will be a grand adventure!"

As a warlock, Lady Moonfire has long been interested in Draigdurroch Tower for her own purposes. She knows everything in the Adventure Background up to the point where Draigdurroch disappeared. She did not know the dwarf personally, but he was reputed to own quite a collection of magic tomes. Thus, in addition to hiring the PCs to determine if the tower is indeed the source of the early winter, Lady Moonfire also asks them to bring her any ritual books or other magic tomes that they discover.

Curuvar the Brazen: Loudwater's resident wizard is a middle-aged human who is normally suspicious of strangers. However, Curuvar is under a lot of pressure to do something about the change in the weather, since it is "obviously" being caused by evil magic. He is not the adventuring type, and his own efforts to discover the source of the problem from afar have borne little fruit. Despite that, he has ascertained that a powerful magical aura definitely emanates from the area near the Dire Wood. Like Lady Moonfire, Curuvar is interested in Draigdurroch Tower and asks the PCs to bring him anything they discover that might pertain to the warlock's arcane research.

"By Mystra's lost spell, I'm certain that the tower must be connected to this somehow. Nobody knows what that dwarf Draigdurroch was researching or what triggered the calamity that encased his tower in magic ice, but any time powerful magic is involved, these things have a way of spiraling out of control. It appears the Dire Wood is drawing a lot of attention these days. Even if the tower isn't the source of the problem, perhaps you can find a clue among the warlock's notes or possessions. It's high time someone investigated all the ancient secrets in this area."

Brother Griffon: The head of the local temple of Silvanus, Brother Griffon is a stout human of Uthgardt descent. Although winter is a natural part of the cycle of the seasons and therefore not a bad thing in and of itself, its early arrival is clearly a perversion of the natural order and as such it is of grave concern to the Forest Father. The balance between the seasons must be preserved. Brother Griffon can introduce the PCs to either Lady Moonfire or Curuvar the Brazen if necessary.

Rumors and Stories: The PCs could get involved in Loudwater's troubles through any of the various local residents who have encountered the effects of the unnatural weather. An evening spent in the Green Tankard yields all sorts of rumors and wild speculation. Farmers are worried about their crops, which might freeze in the fields before the harvest comes in; woodsfolk tell stories of freak snowstorms occurring in the middle of the day and then vanishing as if they were never there; hunters spread tales of strange blue-skinned goblins lurking around the outskirts of the Dire Wood. Everyone has a pet theory about what or who is behind the problems, but mainly, the common folk are just worried.

Travel Interrupted: If the PCs have no ties to Loudwater and you just want to use the tower as a stand-alone adventure site, you could consider starting the adventure with the PCs traveling through the Gray Vale on unrelated business, when suddenly they are struck by the powerful magical blizzard. Because of the corrupted fey magic, every attempt that the PCs make to free themselves of the storm leads them around in circles, back toward Draigdurroch Tower. The only way for the PCs to escape the trap they are caught in is to make their way to the tower and find out what is causing the unnatural weather.

Journey to the Tower

Although nobody currently living in town has ever been to the tower, many have a good idea of its approximate location about a mile east of the edge of the Dire Wood. It's less than a day's travel to reach the tower from Loudwater, so the PCs should not need to make camp along the way. However, given the situation, they might want to prepare for cold weather. Loudwater has a general store and an apothecary who can supply all the basics. The PCs might also think to cast the Endure Elements ritual on themselves, or ask either Lady Moonfire or Curuvar the Brazen to cast it for them.

J1. The Blizzard

As the PCs depart Loudwater, read the following:

The Gray Vale is beautiful in the late summer, although a pronounced chill in the air even during what should be the hottest part of the day indicates that something is definitely amiss with the weather. The first few hours of your journey pass uneventfully, but as you travel through the High Forest, the temperature drops steadily and a sharp wind carries with it the promise of winter, even though the leaves have not even begun their annual autumn change.

More time passes, until finally the sight of the stark white wood of the albino trees that mark the boundary of the Dire Wood informs you that Draigdurroch Tower should be within a few miles of here. However, none of the landmarks indicated on your map are visible for reference. The horizon is shrouded by a blanket of solid white. A cold fog appears to issue from the very heart of the dark forest and snowflakes begin to fall from the steel-gray sky. The way ahead is quickly obscured, as is the way you have just come.

The Quests

While on this adventure, the PCs can try to fulfill two quests. The minor one could be accomplished as the PCs seek to fulfill the major one regarding the weather issue.

Major Quest—Fix the Weather
Discover the source of the unnatural early onset of winter and remove it so that the seasons return to normal. Lady Moonfire rewards the PCs 500 gp on behalf of the grateful citizens of Loudwater for completing this quest.

Reward: 625 XP and 500 gp.

Minor Quest—Find Draigdurroch's Research
Bring Draigdurroch's ritual books and his research notes to either Lady Moonfire or Curuvar the Brazen. Either NPC is willing to pay up to 100 gp for these items.

Reward: 125 XP per character, plus 100 gp per item retrieved.

The storm's intensity continues to rise minute by minute until the PCs are caught in the middle of a full-on blizzard. To find their way through the driving snow, they must succeed on a skill challenge.

The PCs must survive the harsh conditions while staying on the right path to reach Draigdurroch Tower. They use their skills and knowledge to choose the right direction and protect themselves against the storm's hazards.

Because the storm is in some sense attacking the characters as they travel, this challenge proceeds in hours. Each PC must attempt an Endurance check every hour, and each PC can also attempt one other check during each hour. The challenge ends when the PCs achieve either 8 successes or 3 failures.

The Blizzard **Level 2**
Skill Challenge XP 375

The snow comes at you so fast that it both blocks sight and somehow threatens to mesmerize you with its chaotic patterns. A deep chill pervades the area, as well. Can you find your way through this storm to your destination?

Complexity 3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).
Primary Skills Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, History, Insight, Nature, Perception.
Other Skill Endurance, Heal.
Victory If the PCs succeed, they find their way through the storm, losing no additional healing surges, and they emerge in a favorable position before the goblin ambush.
Defeat If the PCs fail, they still survive the storm, but each character loses 2 healing surges to represent the beating they take from the blizzard, and they are in an unfavorable position when the goblins attack.

Acrobatics DC 10 (1 success, no maximum). A failure with this skill costs the character 1 healing surge. The PC helps guide the party over hazards such as icy patches of ground and through sudden gusts of wind that would otherwise knock party members off their feet.
Arcana DC 15 (1 success, no maximum). The first time a character earns a success with this skill, he or she also recognizes the fey nature of the magic, which opens up the use of the Insight skill (see below). The PC senses the direction from which the arcane energy powering the storm flow and can work backward from the flows of magic to get a sense of the tower's location.
Athletics DC 10 (1 success, no maximum). A failure with this skill costs the character 1 healing surge. The PC helps force a way through the storm using brute strength—breaking a path through a snow drift, moving fallen trees or jumping over them, and so forth.
History DC 10 (1 success maximum). The PC recalls a specific detail about the location of Draigdurroch Tower or discovers a unique landmark that helps orient the group to its location and guides them along the right track.
Insight DC 10 (1 success, no maximum). This skill cannot be used until it has been unlocked by a successful Arcana check. Because this storm is partially the result of fey magic, some of its effects are illusory. A PC who succeeds on an Insight check recognizes some of these illusions and can help the group avoid traveling in circles, prevent them from choosing paths that look safe but are dangerous, and so forth.
Nature DC 5 (1 success, no maximum). The PC relies on knowledge of the area, an ability to study terrain, an innate sense of direction, and wilderness survival skills to help lead the group through the blizzard.
Perception DC 15 (1 success, no maximum). The PC relies on keen senses to look for safe paths, avoid hazards, spot gaps in the swirling storm, and otherwise help guide the group through the storm.
Endurance DC 10 (0 successes, all characters must attempt). Every character must attempt an Endurance check every turn (representing 1 hour of exposure to the storm) to resist the chill winds and other hazards of the blizzard. Failure means the character loses a healing surge, but it does not count as a failure on the overall challenge. Characters who are protected by the Endure Elements ritual or who have innate cold resistance gain a +5 bonus to these checks (they are not immune, because some of the cold is magical). The PC tolerates the weather conditions.
Heal DC 10 (0 successes, but can restore a healing surge). A character who has not attempted to use another skill (other than Endurance) during a turn can attempt a Heal check if another character fails a skill check that would cause the loss of a healing surge. If the Heal check is successful, the other character does not lose a healing surge, but that character's failure still counts against the overall skill challenge. The Heal check does not count as either a success or a failure against the challenge. The PC helps another deal with the extreme weather conditions.

Development

As the unnatural blizzard subsides, the PCs can see that the area surrounding the tower for several miles is covered with ice and snow, a preview of the fate that awaits the rest of the Gray Vale. Visibility is limited, but they can make out a stark gray silhouette on the horizon some distance away. They still have a few hours of daylight left, and even if they lost healing surges to the blizzard and make camp, it's clear that doing so is risky, since another, stronger storm could come along at any moment. The best course of action is to proceed to the tower. (If they turn back to Loudwater at any point, they have to overcome another blizzard the next time they try to retrace their steps to the tower, and each storm's intensity is greater than the last one, increasing the DCs of all the skill checks by 1.)

Frost Goblin Ambush

Although the ice warriors have manipulated the original ritual, the fundamental magic creating these unnatural snowstorms is still that of the Feywild, and as such it works in unexpected and mysterious ways. A few days ago, a tribe of local goblins was caught in one of the sudden blizzards. Although many of the goblins died, those who survived the storm were subtly altered, becoming frost-touched. Their skin gained a bluish tint and they found themselves well adapted to their new environment.

As the PCs draw nearer to the tower, they reach an area where several hills come together with dangerous ice between them. This is an ideal spot for an ambush, and the frost goblins are waiting.

Tactical Encounter: "Frost Goblin Ambush," page 9.

Frost Goblin Ambush

Encounter Level 3 (975 XP)

Setup

A group of frost-touched goblins has set up an ambush in this location. Depending on how they fared in the skill challenge, the PCs come into the area in a more or less favorable position. If the PCs succeeded on the challenge, they set up in the area marked "A" on the map. If the PCs failed the challenge, they set up in the area marked "B" instead.

In addition, this encounter also includes an area of treacherous ice.

The goblins are positioned at a higher elevation, as shown on the map. Ramps of packed snow lead up the hills in a few places, but the terrain favors the goblins. If none of the PCs succeeds on a Perception check, the goblins gain a surprise round. The goblins are all crouching down and have the advantage of elevation.

3 frost goblin sharpshooters (S)
8 frost goblin cutters (C)
1 frost goblin hexer (H)

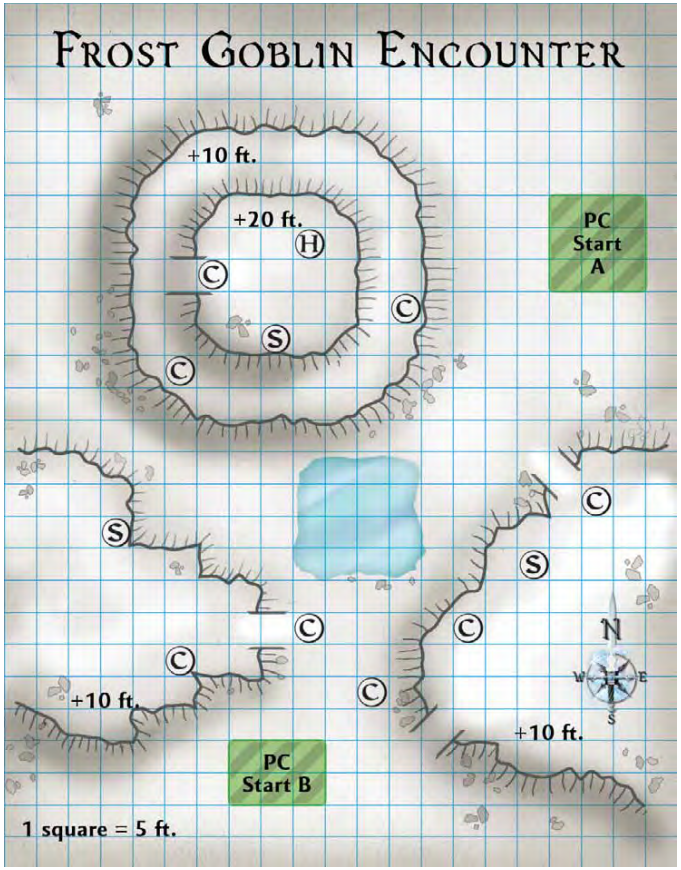
Perception Check
DC varies: (Active or passive, as appropriate; opposed by a goblin's Stealth check, and it has a +5 bonus.) *A goblin is crouching down above you.*

Nature Check (Trained Only) DC 16: These goblins appear different from normal. Their blue skin is highly unusual, and the fact that they are not dressed for the cold weather indicates that they have somehow adapted to the unnatural winter. They are probably resistant to cold.

When the goblins attack, read:

A mass of goblins leap up from the hills on both sides of you. Most of them brandish javelins and crude short swords, but a few of them wear better armor and carry crossbows. From the highest vantage point, another goblin clad in robes waves a rod and makes arcane gestures.

Treacherous Ice Hazard	Level 1 Obstacle XP 100
A slick sheet of ice creates a hazardous obstacle.	
Hazard: This sheet of ice fills 20 contiguous squares, turning them into difficult terrain.	
Perception	
No check is necessary to notice the ice.	
Additional Skill: Nature	
✦ DC 15: The character identifies the squares of treacherous ice.	
Trigger	
The ice attacks when a creature enters or begins its turn in a square of treacherous ice. It also attacks when a creature stands up from prone in a square of treacherous ice.	
Attack	
Opportunity Action	**Melee**
Target: Creature on the ice	
Attack: +5 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 damage and fall prone. If the creature is already prone, no damage but its turn ends immediately.	
Countermeasures	
✦ With a DC 10 Acrobatics check and a move action, a character can move into 1 square of treacherous ice without risk of falling. If the check fails or the character moves more than 1 square, the ice attacks.	
✦ With a DC 15 Acrobatics check and a move action, a character can move at its normal speed across treacherous ice without risk of falling. (The ice is still considered difficult terrain.) If the check fails or the character attempts to run or charge through treacherous ice, the ice attacks.	
✦ With a DC 15 Acrobatics check, a character can run (move action) or charge (standard action) across treacherous ice without risk of falling. (The ice is still considered difficult terrain.) If the check fails, the ice attacks.	



Tactics

The terrain favors ranged combat and the frost goblin cutters start out by tossing javelins rather than rushing into melee. They engage anybody who tries to climb up the sides of the hills, allowing the sharpshooters to remain free. The hexer uses its *freezing cloud* to create a patch of difficult terrain, hopefully slowing some of the PCs down so that they are exposed to more ranged attacks. The goblins' ice walk ability allows them to ignore the effect. The hexer uses its *freezing hex* and *icebound hex* to slow down any

PCs who appear to be leading the attack. It tries to keep at least one cutter near it so that it can use its *lead from the rear* ability if anyone targets it with a ranged attack.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The light varies based on the time of day.

Hills: The hills are at +10 foot and +20 foot elevation as indicated on the map. Ramps of packed snow lead up the sides of the hills in a few places; these are considered normal terrain. A character can also try to climb the sides of the hills, which are icy and slippery. A successful DC 10 Athletics check allows a character to climb at half speed (so it would cost 4 squares of movement to climb up the side of a 10-foot tall hill).

Ice Slick: The 4-by-5 square area indicated on the map is hindering terrain. Characters moving through this area are subjected to attacks by the treacherous ice (see its statistics block for details). The goblins all have the ice walk ability and can ignore the treacherous ice.

Treasure: The goblins have a total of 50 gp among them, along with two *potions of healing*. The hexer carries a *+1 rod of reaving*.

3 Frost Goblin Sharpshooters (S) **Level 2 Artillery**
Small natural humanoid (cold) XP 125 each

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision
HP 31; **Bloodied** 15
AC 16; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11
Resist 5 cold
Speed 6 (ice walk)

Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 2 damage.

Hand Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.

Sniper
When a frost goblin sharpshooter makes a ranged attack from hiding and misses, it is still considered to be hiding.

Combat Advantage
The frost goblin sharpshooter deals an extra 1d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Goblin Tactics (immediate reaction; when missed by a melee attack; at-will)
The frost goblin shifts 1 square.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 8 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, short sword, hand crossbow with 20 bolts

8 Frost Goblin Cutters (C) **Level 1 Minion**
Small natural humanoid (cold) XP 25 each

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 16; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11
Resist 5 cold
Speed 6 (ice walk)

Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+5 vs. AC; 4 damage (5 damage if the frost goblin cutter has combat advantage against the target).

Javelin (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +6 vs. AC; 4 damage.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+1)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 8 (-1) **Cha** 8 (-1)
Equipment leather armor, short sword, 5 javelins in sheaf

Frost Goblin Hexer (H) **Level 3 Elite Controller (Leader)**
Small natural humanoid (cold) XP 300

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision
HP 92; **Bloodied** 46
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17; see also *body of ice*
Resist 5 cold
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6 (ice walk); see also *goblin tactics*
Action Points 1

Hexer Rod (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage.

Freezing Hex (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 10; +7 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 1 cold damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Icebound Hex (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 10; +7 vs. Will; the target takes 3d6 + 1 cold damage if it moves during its turn (save ends).

Freezing Cloud (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ✦ **Cold, Zone**
Area burst 3 within 10; automatic hit; all squares within the zone are treated as difficult terrain (creatures with the ice walk ability can ignore this effect). The zone grants concealment to the frost goblin hexer and its allies. The frost goblin hexer can sustain the zone as a minor action, moving it up to 5 squares.

Incite Bravery (immediate reaction, when an ally uses *goblin tactics*; at-will)
Ranged 10; the targeted ally can shift 2 additional squares and make an attack.

Goblin Tactics (immediate reaction; when missed by a melee attack; at-will)
The frost goblin hexer shifts 1 square.

Lead from the Rear (immediate interrupt; when targeted by a ranged attack; at-will)
The frost goblin hexer can change the attack's target to an adjacent ally of its level or lower.

Body of Ice
Any creature that hits the frost goblin hexer with a melee attack is slowed until the end of that creature's next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Stealth +10, Thievery +10
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 18 (+5)
Equipment leather robes, hexer rod

Draigdurroch Tower

Once they have dealt with the frost goblins, the PCs can reach Draigdurroch Tower without further incident. Show the players the illustration of the tower on (below) and **read the following**:

Draigdurroch Tower is encased from top to bottom in a shimmering cocoon of pure ice. The sunlight is reflected in all directions by the angled planes of the frozen barrier, which climbs to a single peak in the air at the top of the tower and widens as it plunges to ground level. A palpable sensation of bitter cold emanates from the tower and its icy prison.

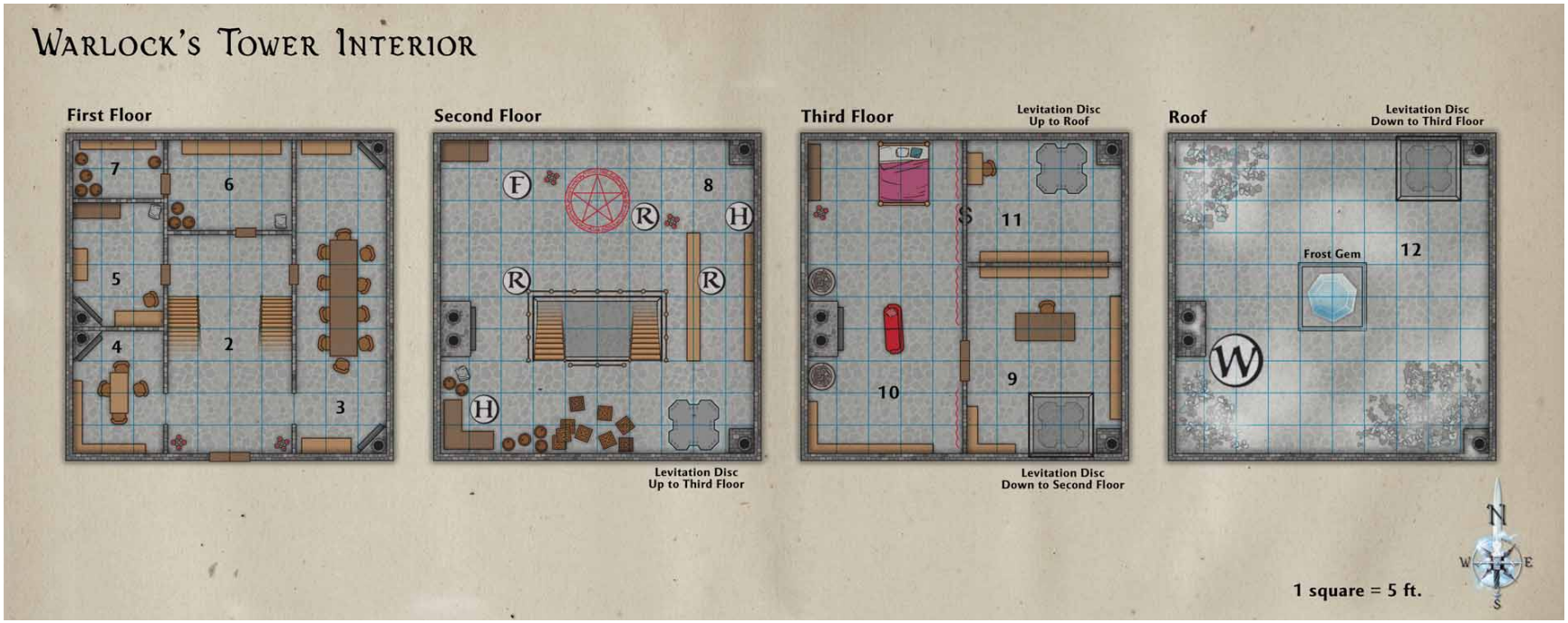
Through the imperfect mirror formed by the ice, you can see that the exterior stone of the tower has been carved into a massive series of sculptures and reliefs depicting various devils in flight. It is as if a huge swirling column of fiends had erupted from deep within the earth and was being pulled into the heavens. Their mouths are open, though whether they are laughing or screaming is hard to tell.

A circular stone walkway winds around the tower's base, and squat statues of leering devils of all sorts line both sides of this path. The cobblestones are frozen over and look slippery. The tower's only obvious entrance is a single door at its base, but a foot-thick sheet of solid ice stands in your way.

Several things happen in this encounter. First, the PCs must come up with a way to breach the ice so that they can reach the door. (They can search around the tower in hopes of finding another entrance, but there is none.) The PCs have a number of ways they can breach through the ice. They can use brute force, they can use various powers (those with the fire keyword could be especially effective), and perhaps they can even use their skills (such as making Perception checks to look for weak points in the ice). The ice is intended as a thematic barrier, not a meaningful obstacle. The 10-foot section in front of the door has an AC and Reflex defense of 4, a Fortitude defense of 12, immunity to effects that target Will, and 40 hit points with resist 20 cold and vulnerable 10 fire. Chopping out this portion of the ice does not cause the rest of the cocoon to collapse.

In the process of clearing their way to the door, the PCs also break the ice away from several sections of the carved exterior of the tower. This is important because as soon as the PCs touch the tower in any fashion (most likely to open the door), the guardians animate and attack.

The door is locked with the Arcane Lock ritual, requiring a successful DC 16 Thievery or Strength



check, or the successful application of the Knock ritual, to open. The Arcane Lock is keyed only to Draigdurroch, and he's not around to open the door for visitors. Of course, the various uninvited guests (first the fey and now the ice warriors) have had their own ways of getting into the tower and have not needed to make use of the door.

Tactical Encounter: "Tower Guardians," page 16.

Features of the Tower

Unless noted otherwise, areas in the tower have the following features.

Illumination: The tower is filled with magic light sources that are often placed in disturbing locations (such as the eyes or other parts of devil statues). The ice that coats every surface reflects and amplifies this ambient light, so the entire interior of the tower is brightly illuminated.

Ceilings: Ceilings are 12 feet high. The center atrium that spans the first and second floors is 24 feet high from top to bottom.

Doors: The first floor of the tower has lightweight wooden interior doors that open easily (break DC 10) and do not have locks. Other doors are stronger (break DC 15) and have locks (DC 19 Thievery to open).

Floors: The tower is made of stone throughout it. Every surface is coated with a thin layer of frost, but this does not impede movement.

Walls: All the tower's walls are made of stone that is about a foot thick. They have a break DC of 35. The icy surface outside the tower is nearly impossible to climb (DC 30) and deals 1d6 cold damage per round to anyone touching it with bare skin.

Windows: The tower has dozens of cunningly created "windows," but they don't let any light into the building. Rather, they serve as a way for those inside the tower to observe the outside. Throughout the tower, statues of devils stand and squat against the walls in various places. Many of these statues have eyes that appear to gleam ever so slightly (DC 15 Perception to notice). The gleam comes from small glass lenses that are placed in the eye sockets. These sockets open onto thin stone tubes containing a cunning system of mirrors. These tubes lead to the open mouths of some of the carvings on the outside of the tower. In essence, anyone who is adjacent to an exterior-facing interior wall can find an opening to peer through to see the outside of the tower on the same side, as if the wall is not there. This grants line of sight, but not line of effect, from the inside of the tower to the outside the tower to any character looking through these periscopelike openings.

Inside the Tower: First Floor

Once the PCs enter the tower, they find that the conditions inside are not much better than those outside, except that the howling wind and driving snow mercifully cease. The temperature remains below freezing, and a thin layer of frost covers every surface inside the tower. (This rime is not thick enough to cause the floors to become slippery, however, so the PCs can walk around inside the tower without having to make Acrobatics checks.)

Everything is perfectly preserved, other than being frozen solid. The magic ice has so thoroughly pervaded every object in the tower that most things are extremely fragile (as if they had been dipped in liquid nitrogen). Wood and stone are largely unharmed, but cloth and metal have become so brittle that they shatter with any sort of rough handling.

When the fey came for Draigdurroch, he was completely unprepared and the struggle was over quickly. The ice warriors have no care for the mundane furnishings of the tower and so have left them undisturbed. The overall effect is that the tower appears lived-in, as if it were suspended in a single moment of time. Even the fireplaces still have frozen blue flames within them (these are important, because they act as portals to the Elemental Chaos, as explained in the tactical encounter).

Tactical Encounter: "Ice Warriors," page 18.

T1. Foyer

Draigdurroch was not terribly creative when it came to his decorating scheme. The interior of the tower continues the theme established by the carvings and statues outside. Doorways lead to the banquet hall and sitting room, while an open two-story atrium with staircases on either side opens out directly in front of the foyer.

T2. Atrium / Stairway

Three closed doors lead from the atrium to the back half of the tower. Reversed staircases lead up from this area to the second floor. When the PCs move into this area, they might draw the attention of the ice warriors, triggering the tactical encounter. However, if the PCs choose to explore the entire ground floor before they go up the stairs, the warriors hold their attack, hoping to catch the PCs when they have split up a bit and some of them are in different rooms.

T3. Banquet Hall

Draigdurroch rarely had guests, but he did occasionally entertain other members of his cabal. The banquet hall runs the length of the tower, with fire-

places on either end. The main table is large enough to seat ten comfortably. The place settings are utilitarian and are of no particular value.

The two fireplaces in this room are filled with frozen blue flames; ice warriors can use both of them to enter from the Elemental Chaos.

T4. Sitting Room

This is a small sitting room with a low table and several comfortable chairs. Long bookshelves line the walls. They are filled with treatises on the Nine Hells and the various devil lords who dwell within, with a particular focus on Asmodeus. A number of books also cover the history of ancient Netheril (the original empire, not its current incarnation). Like everything else in the tower, the books are frozen, but the pages can be turned carefully. If a character takes the time to study these books, a successful DC 20 History check reveals that Draigdurroch had a particular interest in one specific Netherese city named Karse. The location of Karse appears to have been somewhere in the current area that is covered by the Dire Wood.

The fireplace in this room is filled with frozen blue flames and the ice warriors can use it to enter from the Elemental Chaos.

Treasure: On one of the bookshelves is a delicate sculpture made of crystal depicting Asmodeus. To the right collector, this item is worth 260 gold pieces. However, the PCs must be careful to handle the item so that it does not shatter.

T5. Servants' Room

Draigdurroch hated to interrupt his work to focus on the mundane details of life, so he had a pair of live-in servants. When the warlock was dragged off to the Feywild, nobody noticed the two elderly humans hiding fearfully in their beds. When the ritual of ice was enacted and the tower froze solid, the two servants were killed instantly and their preserved corpses remain in this room, hiding under the sheets with terrified looks on their faces. They died 30 years ago, so they are long past the reach of the Raise Dead ritual, although the PCs could use the Speak with Dead ritual to interrogate the corpses (but they would have to thaw the bodies out first—their jaws are frozen shut).

The fireplace in this room is filled with frozen blue flames, and the ice warriors can use them to enter from the Elemental Chaos.

T6. Kitchen

The kitchen is basic, but it contains all the implements that one would expect to find. Draigdurroch had a taste for pickled eels. Several glass jars of frozen eels are sitting on the counter. The PCs might be distracted by these bizarre delicacies for a moment, thinking they are perhaps some sort of preserved devil-spawn or mind flayer tadpoles, but they are just mundane eels.

T7. Larder

The larder is well stocked and contains enough food to feed three people for several months. Everything has a 30-year case of freezer burn, however, so it would be inedible even if it were somehow thawed out.

Inside the Tower: Second Floor

If the PCs have not already drawn the ice warriors' notice while exploring the first floor of the tower, they encounter the elemental creatures once they ascend to the second floor. The entire level is taken up by a huge laboratory. No interior walls are on this level, although tall bookcases do block off an area on one side. Along the other walls one can find an alchemical workbench, a table covered with bits and pieces of warlock implements and infernal carvings, and some crates and barrels containing various magic and alchemical supplies. Carved into the floor on the northern side is a large summoning circle inlaid with silver. A successful DC 20 Arcana check can determine that the runes and sigils are attuned to the Nine Hells.

The staircases run up and down between the first and second floors of the tower. The atrium spans both levels, with a decorative railing around its edge on the second floor to prevent people from falling over. However, the railing is not sturdy; any character who is bull rushed or pushed over the edge receives a +2 bonus to his saving throw to avoid the fall, but the railing breaks free if the character fails the saving throw and falls.

Although the tower is clearly three stories high when observed from the outside, there is no obvious way to reach the third floor from the second floor. The trick is that there is a section of floor in the southeast corner (shown on the map) that acts like a Tenser's Floating Disk. A character who stands on any of the appropriate squares feels the palpable plane of force beneath his or her feet. A successful DC 15 Arcana check allows a character to realize the nature of this

disk and how to command it. Unlike a regular Tenser's Floating Disk, this platform can be commanded to move up and down only, and it moves only along its prescribed path. It requires a move action to command the disk to ascend or descend, and the disk takes a full 6 seconds to complete its movement (an additional safeguard that Draigdurroch included in case anyone was ever pursuing him through his own tower).

Treasure: Among the few unspoiled alchemical components, the PCs can discover three vials of alchemist's frost (see the *Adventurer's Vault* supplement for details). If you don't have that book or don't want to give out that specific item, then the PCs find 210 gold pieces worth of miscellaneous alchemical and ritual components that they can sell or keep for their own use.

Inside the Tower: Third Floor

The third floor of the tower houses Draigdurroch's research library, personal study, and living quarters. It also contains a few traps that he placed in the event that anyone ever attempted to ransack his belongings. The ice warriors have no interest in Draigdurroch's possessions, so they use this floor only as a means to venture back and forth to the roof of the tower, where they have been modifying the gemstone that controls the magical ritual.

T8. Library

This is where Draigdurroch kept his collection of ritual books and the notes from his magical research. The bookshelves are all magically warded and the books have been protected from the effects of the frost that permeates nearly everything else in the tower. A great many books fill the shelves, and it should take some time for someone to study them all.

The details on Draigdurroch's contact with the remaining fragments of the failed deity Karsus indicate that he was working on forging a new type of pact that would draw upon the echoes of the demigod's lingering spite and rage to create effects of dark magic. A warlock character who spends several months studying these notes and attempting to recreate Draigdurroch's research can, if you allow it, change an eldritch pact to the dark pact described in the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*.

Draigdurroch did not leave his library completely defenseless, however. The reading desk has two light fixtures that hold small jets of everburning flame. Whenever anyone other than Draigdurroch touches any of the books in the library, the trap activates and attacks, shooting jets of fire at intruders.

T9. Master's Quarters

Draigdurroch's personal living space continues the devilish theme that has been established elsewhere in the tower. Unlike the furnishings found on the lower floors, everything in this room is of the highest quality. Unfortunately, the fine silks and other expensive materials have been damaged by 30 years of endless frost. Tapestries hang from the walls. Their flowing folds are stiff and brittle; if a character handles them too roughly, they crack and fall apart.

Behind one of the tapestries is a secret door (DC 21 Perception to notice) that leads into the study. This door was once sealed with the Arcane Lock ritual, but the ice warriors have broken that ward and the door now opens easily once it is discovered.

T10. Study

Draigdurroch's study is surprisingly free of ornamentation. A heavy wooden desk dominates the room, with a single chair. There are no obvious exits.

The desk is warded, and this magic protects its contents from the everpresent frost. The magic also wards the desk against outside interference, and the glyph activates and attacks if the PCs disturb it without first detecting and disabling the trap.

Inside the desk, the PCs find Draigdurroch's journal. The entries begin with his arrival in the area, the construction of his tower in honor of Asmodeus, his theory that the ruins of the Netherese city of Karse lie beneath the Dire Wood, his early contact with the scattered fragments of the dead god Karsus, and his efforts to forge an eldritch pact with Karsus. He makes a passing note that the "ridiculous faeries" who live in the Dire Wood sent an emissary with a warning not to tamper with the demigod. Draigdurroch's response was to blast the emissary to cinders. *"Let them feel the fire of Asmodeus, and soon the fury of Karsus as well,"* he writes in the final entry of his journal, with obviously misplaced self-satisfaction. *"They claim that they will punish me for my actions if I do not heed their warnings. THEY will punish ME? How laughable!"*

Another levitation platform, identical to the one between the second floor and the third floor, operates between this room and the roof of the tower.

Glyph of Warding	Level 2 Warder
Trap	XP 125

An explosion erupts from the desk in a burst of silver-tinged green light.

Trap: A magical glyph wards the warlock's desk, ready to explode with arcane fury when the trap is triggered.

Perception

✦ DC 15: The character notices the glyph.

Additional Skill: Arcana

✦ DC 15: The character spots the glyph and provides a +2 bonus to Thievery checks made to disable it.

Trigger

When a creature tries to open the desk drawer (which would include searching the desk in general without first checking for traps), the glyph explodes. The papers in the warlock's desk are destroyed if the trap is triggered.

Attack

Immediate Reaction **Close** burst 3

Targets: All creatures in burst.

Attack: +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d6 + 3 fire damage and ongoing 2 fire damage (save ends).

Countermeasures

✦ An adjacent character can disable the glyph with a DC 15 Thievery check.

Top of the Tower: Winter's Heart

Read the following:

The top of the tower presents a bizarre scene that is strangely beautiful in its own way. The view of the surrounding area is refracted and twisted in spectacular fashion, as if you are standing inside a gigantic prism looking out. Floating several feet above the exact center point of the tower, forming the keystone at the apex of the icy cocoon, is a perfect sapphire, easily the size of a man's clenched fist.

Above the gemstone, the ice that sheathes the tower draws together into a single point about 20 feet in the air. All around this jutting finger, the air appears to harden into ice and snow, swirling away in all directions as it is propelled by a vicious wind. The clouds above the tower appear to draw energy from the gem, filling them with the pure essence of a winter storm.

The wind whips across the roof of the tower on the inside as well, with each chilling gust accompanied by a pulse of energy that erupts from the sapphire's heart. The gem's otherwise flawless surface appears to have been marred by scratches or runes that glow with their own white energy.

Investigation reveals that these scratches are in the Barazhad script of the Primordial language and it can be surmised with a successful DC 15 Arcana check that they were made by the ice warriors to corrupt the gem's power. This gem is undoubtedly the source of the unnatural weather phenomena.

Tactical Encounter: "Winter's Heart," page 21.

Concluding the Adventure

Word of the PCs' success precedes their return to Loudwater, since the change in the weather and the rising temperatures are noticed immediately by everyone in the area. The local farmers are extremely grateful and the PCs never again have to buy their own drinks at the Green Tankard. Lady Moonfire throws a huge party in their honor, and Brother Griffon offers them the blessings of Silvanus as well.

Curuvar the Brazen wants to pick their brains about everything they learned—in particular, he asks if the PCs found Draigdurroch's body at the tower. Upon learning that they did not, he speculates that the warlock might have been taken into the Feywild. Regardless, Curuvar warns the PCs that although they have done Loudwater a great service, the fey of the Dire Wood have a different view of the world than mortals do, and they are not likely to be pleased by the PCs' having undone their handiwork, even though it was for a good cause. The PCs might well receive a visit from the fey, asking them to justify their actions or face the same punishment as Draigdurroch did.

A number of seeds for future adventures suggest themselves here. The PCs might have to perform some tasks to placate the fey of the Dire Wood, or perhaps they might travel to the ruins of Karse in an attempt to learn whether Draigdurroch made contact with a dead god from ancient Netheril. The cabal of warlocks of which Draigdurroch was a member is still active in the world, and they might serve as allies or enemies of the PCs in the future. Certainly they would be interested in continuing Draigdurroch's research if they have the opportunity, and the only way to stop them might be for the PCs to find a way to destroy the remains of Karsus. The consequences of this adventure don't all need to be revealed immediately; for example, when the PCs reach the paragon tier, the cabal might try to hire or trick them into entering the Feywild in an attempt to rescue Draigdurroch from his imprisonment.

If you are planning to run these characters through the Forgotten Realms mega-adventure *Scepter Tower of Spellgard*, you could set that up by putting some information and rumors about Lady Saharel among Draigdurroch's research notes. Perhaps the warlock was thinking about trying to find Lady Saharel himself, or perhaps he learned about her in the course of his studies of the ancient Netherese Empire, since she was alive during those days.

Tower Guardians

Encounter Level 2 (700 XP)

Setup

The tower's guardians do not attack until the PCs interact directly with the tower (their instructions are to guard the tower, and the icy cocoon is not part of the tower). The most likely trigger is after the PCs have cleared the ice away from the front door and attempt to open (or break down) the door.

A character who suspects that some of the statues are guardians and studies them closely can try to identify the iron defenders before combat starts. If the characters attack the guardians directly, they activate even if the PCs have not interfered with the tower. However, if PCs have not broken the ice, then the clay guardian cannot reach them because it is initially on the inside of the frozen barrier.

1 tower clay scout (C)
4 tower iron defenders (I)

Perception Check
DC 21: *Not all these statues are merely statues!*

When the guardians attack, read:

One of the devils carved into the side of the tower suddenly turns its head toward you. Ice breaks from its stone wings as it takes flight. Several of the squat toadlike statues along the sides of the path also shudder and shake off the frost that coats them.

Tactics

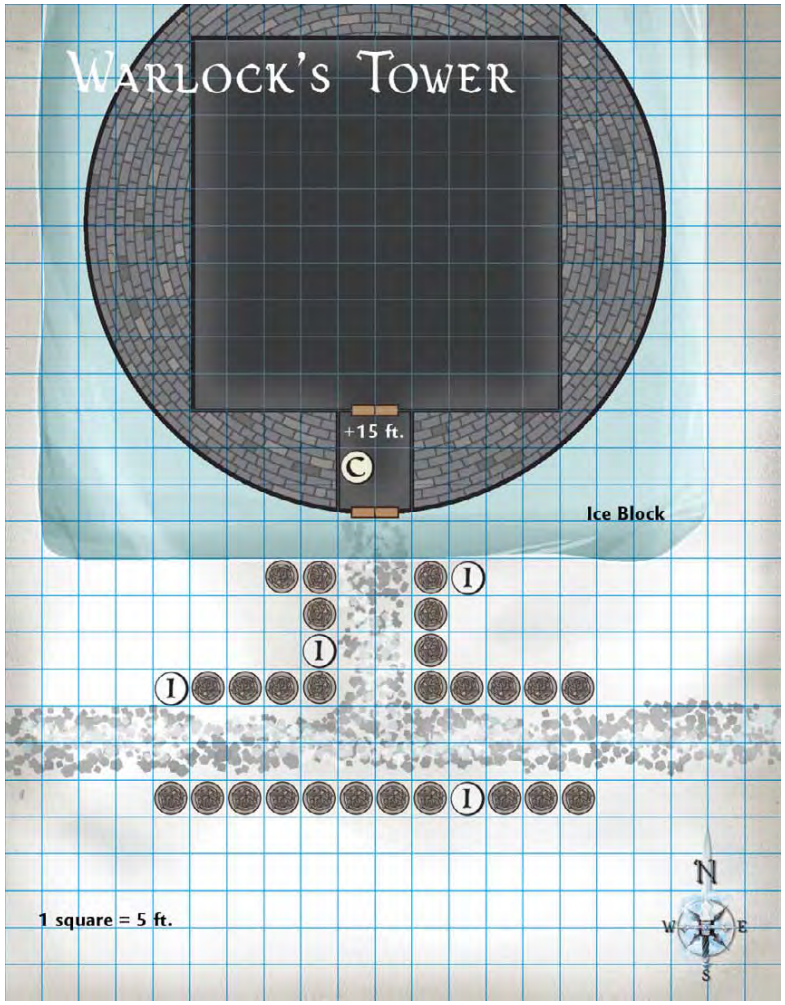
All the homunculi have the *guard area* ability and the area they are guarding is the tower. This gives the tower clay scout a bonus to attack rolls, and the tower iron defenders a bonus to all defenses, within 5 squares of the tower. However, they are not limited to engaging creatures only within that radius. The tower clay scout is reasonably intelligent and attempts to engage ranged attackers, relying on its *mind touch* and *limited invisibility* to protect it from reprisals. The tower iron defenders are less intelligent and go after the nearest enemy.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The light varies based on the time of day.

Path: The frozen cobblestones are slippery. Squares on the path are treated as difficult terrain. A creature that attempts to run or charge across these squares must succeed on a DC 10 Acrobatics check or fall prone, ending its move action.

Statues: The statues that do not animate are normal stone statues. They are depictions of squat, toadlike devils, about 4 feet high. Squares containing statues are treated as difficult terrain, and the statues can provide cover to a Medium or smaller creature that crouches or falls prone behind them.



Tower Clay Scout (C) **Level 2 Lurker**
Small natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 125

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 31; **Bloodied** 15
AC 16; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15
Immune disease, poison
Speed 6, fly 3 (clumsy)

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
+3 vs. AC; 1d6 damage, and the homunculus makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +2 vs. Fortitude; the target is slowed (save ends). See also *guard area.*

Mind Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +5 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends); see also *guard area.*

Guard Area
The tower clay scout gains a +4 bonus to attack rolls against targets within 5 squares of the tower.

Limited Invisibility ✦ **Illusion**
The tower clay scout is invisible to dazed creatures.

Redirect (immediate interrupt; when targeted by a melee or a ranged attack; at-will)
The tower clay scout makes an attack against the attacker; +4 vs. Will; the triggering attack targets a creature adjacent to the tower clay scout instead (as chosen by the clay scout).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +8
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 16 (+4)

4 Tower Iron Defenders (I) **Level 2 Soldier**
Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 125 each

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 39; **Bloodied** 19
AC 17; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12; see also *guard area*
Immune disease, poison
Speed 6

Bite (standard; at-will)
+7 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.

Guard Area
The tower iron defender gains a +1 bonus to all defenses (not included above) when it is within 5 squares of the tower. However, it does not hesitate to pursue foes who step beyond this area. The tower iron defender does not pursue creatures that flee the area entirely, since its focus is on guarding the tower.

Pursue and Attack
When the tower iron defender makes an opportunity attack, it shifts 1 square before or after the attack.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 5 (-2) **Cha** 8 (+0)

Ice Warriors

Encounter Level 4 (900 XP)

Setup

This encounter can span multiple locations, with combatants on both the first and second floors of the tower. The positions indicated on the map show where the ice warriors are located when the PCs first enter the tower. However, the warriors might engage the PCs from different positions depending on how the situation unfolds.

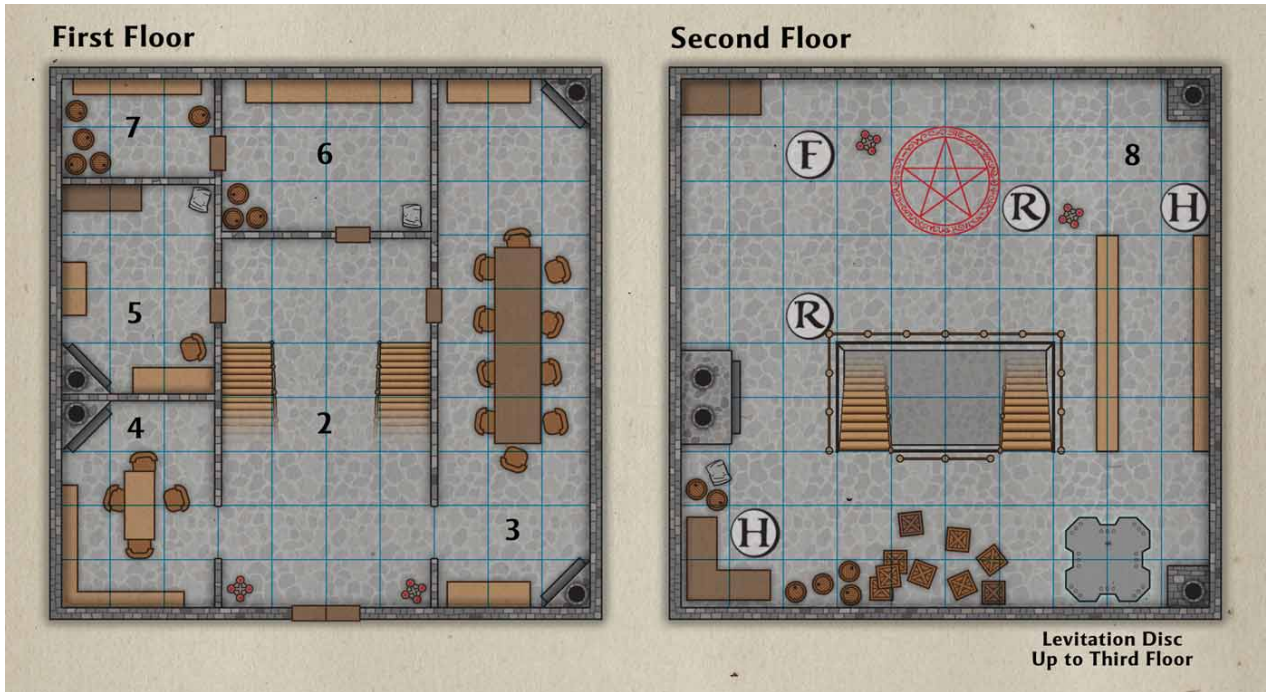
The four fireplaces on the first floor of the tower are conduits to the Elemental Chaos, and additional ice warrior reinforcements come through these portals until the PCs disable or destroy them.

In addition, any number of ice warrior shardlings (minions) can enter the battlefield through the four fireplace portals, beginning in the second round of combat. (The XP budget for this encounter assumes that the PCs have to fight at least 8 shardlings.) There are none in the tower when the PCs first arrive, so they are not shown on the map.

1 ice warrior frostling (F)
2 ice warrior icicle hurlers (H)
2 ice warrior raiders (R)

When the warriors attack, read:

A featureless creature made entirely of translucent blue ice stomps forward. It wears heavy armor and carries a huge maul-shaped chunk of frozen ice. Behind it, a more slender version of the same creature creates long, sharp missiles of ice, ready to throw. Yet another version of the same basic creature, this one wielding a wicked blade of glistening ice, glides across the floor, jagged shards of ice crystallizing out of thin air all around it.



2 Ice Warrior Icicle Hurlers (H)	Level 2 Artillery
Medium elemental animate (cold)	XP 125 each
Initiative +4	**Senses** Perception +8
HP 32; **Bloodied** 16	
AC 15; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 cold	
Speed 6 (ice walk)	
(+) **Slam** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
+7 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage plus 1d4 cold damage.	
(↗) **Flying Icicle** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
Ranged 5/10; +9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 2 damage plus 1d6 cold damage.	
✲ **Icicle Storm** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold**	
Area burst 3 within 20; +7 vs. AC; 1d10+1 cold damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Primordial
Str 14 (+3)	**Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+1)

2 Ice Warrior Raiders (R)	Level 2 Soldier
Medium elemental animate (cold)	XP 125 each
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +1
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 13	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 cold	
Speed 6 (ice walk)	
(+) **Maul** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). Against a slowed target, +1d6 cold damage.	
⸸ **Ice Embrace** (minor; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
+7 vs. Fortitude; the target is immobilized by ice (save ends).	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Primordial
Str 17 (+4)	**Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 18 (+5)	**Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Equipment maul	

Ice Warrior Frostling (F) Level 4 Controller (Leader)	
Medium elemental animate (cold)	XP 200
Initiative +4	**Senses** Perception +8
Icy Aura (Cold) aura 5 (not active while bloodied); cold creatures in the area gain regeneration 2. Enemies treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain.	
HP 54; **Bloodied** 27	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 16	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 cold	
Speed 6 (ice walk)	
⊕ **Ice Shard** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 cold damage.	
↗ **Freezing Shot** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
Ranged 10; +9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 cold damage, the target is slowed until the end of the binder's next turn, and one ally within 3 squares of the target can shift 3 to a space adjacent to the target.	
✲ **Icy Burst** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Cold**	
Area burst 1 within 5; +7 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 4 cold damage and the target is slowed (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is immobilized (save ends).	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Primordial
Skills Intimidate +13	
Str 18 (+6)	**Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 18 (+6)

Ice Warrior Shardlings Level 1 Minion	
Medium elemental humanoid (cold)	XP 25 each
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +1
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 11	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 5 cold	
Speed 6 (ice walk)	
⊕ **Ice Shard** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**	
+5 vs. AC; 4 cold damage.	
↗ **Ice Bolt** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**	
Ranged 5/10; +4 vs. AC; 4 cold damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Primordial
Str 17 (+3)	**Dex** 14 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+1)
Con 13 (+1)	**Int** 11 (+0) **Cha** 8 (-1)

Arcana Check (Trained Only) DC 16: These creatures are ice warriors, denizens of the Elemental Chaos who seek to turn the world into a frigid wasteland. They must have been drawn here by the icy tomb of Draigdurroch Tower.

Tactics

This encounter can be overwhelming if all the ice warriors engage the PCs at the same time. A better way to run this encounter is as a series of waves, splitting the warriors up into two or more smaller groups.

The warriors are initially on the second floor, so the PCs probably cannot perceive them. If a PC comes up the stairs, then the warriors attack, which most likely leads that PC to retreat, and the warriors come forward. The raiders and the frostlings descend the stairs, while the hurlers take advantage of the open atrium to launch ranged attacks at any character they can see. Meanwhile, the shardlings begin coming out of the fireplace portals.

If the frostling has the element of surprise or if it can catch a group of PCs together, it uses its *icy burst*. It is equally effective as a ranged or melee combatant so it adjusts its position and tactics to try to give its allies the maximum benefit of its icy aura.

The raiders try to focus on a single PC so that they can receive the benefit of their extra cold damage (the first maul hit slows the PC, allowing subsequent hits to benefit from the extra damage).

The icicle hurlers are extremely dangerous because of their *double attack* ability. They can choose the size of their *hail storm* attack, so they do not hesitate to use it whenever it is recharged.

The ice warriors pursue the PCs anywhere within the tower. They break off their attack only if all the PCs leave the tower. Given enough time (at least a day) they can draw reinforcements from the Elemental Chaos to replenish their numbers.

They must have been drawn here by the icy tomb of Draigdurroch Tower.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Portals: The PCs can recognize the frozen flames in each fireplace as being magically active with a successful DC 15 Arcana check. A DC 20 check result recognizes that the fireplaces are small portals to the Elemental Chaos. The rifts are large enough for Medium creatures to pass through (although if the PCs go through, they will die, since they are probably completely unprepared to survive in the Elemental Chaos). Even if the PCs don't recognize what the portals can do beforehand, they can figure it out once the ice warrior shardlings start coming through it.

During the first round of combat, four shardlings enter the first floor, one through each portal. Each portal has a recharge of 5–6. At the start of each new round of combat, roll a d6 for every active portal (the same way you would roll to see if a creature's powers recharge). Those portals that recharge trigger the arrival of another shardling from that portal. When the PCs close a portal, it does not change the recharge frequency of the other portals. However, if there are ever 8 shardlings on the map at the start of a round, none of the portals recharge that round.

To close a portal, the PCs can destroy it by brute force (each portal has AC and Reflex defenses of 5, Fortitude defense 10, immunity to attacks that target Will, resist 5 all, and 30 hit points). They can also close a portal by means of Arcana checks (attacking the magical auras that keep the gate open) or Thievery checks (treating the portals as magic traps). Only a character who is trained in the skill can attempt these checks. It requires a total of 4 successes with either Arcana or Thievery to close a portal. A DC 11 check result counts as one success and also suppresses the portal for 1 round (meaning that portal definitely does not recharge on the next round). For every 5 points by which the character's check result exceeds 11, he or she scores an additional success (meaning that a check result of 26 can close a portal in a single round).

Tables: There are various tables and other similar pieces of furniture indicated on the map (most notably in the banquet room). With a successful DC 10 Athletics check, a creature can hop up on a table as part of normal movement; otherwise it takes an extra square of movement to clamber up. A creature standing atop a table has combat advantage against foes of its size or smaller. However, because everything in the tower is coated with a thin layer of ice, the creature must succeed on a DC 20 Acrobatics check at the end of its turn to avoid slipping and falling off. If the check fails, that creature lands prone in a randomly determined square adjacent to the table—even one occupied by another creature.

Bookshelves: These are 10 feet high and crammed with books. They block movement, line of effect, and line of sight. As a standard action, a creature can push over a bookshelf with a successful DC 25 Strength check. A fallen shelf covers an area 2 squares on a side. Any creature in a square the shelf falls in is subject to a melee attack: +7 vs. Reflex; 3d6 damage, and the target is grabbed until escape (DC 15). A fallen shelf creates difficult terrain in the squares it covers.

Summoning Circle: A character standing within the summoning circle on the second floor can feel a powerful eldritch force. Any attacks made using powers that have the arcane keyword gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls while the attacker is standing in the circle. The warriors cannot benefit from this effect.

Treasure: When the ice warriors are defeated, their equipment melts away (since it is made of ice). However, one of the mauls carried by the raiders is an actual weapon, and the PCs can claim this *+1 frost maul*.

A character standing within the summoning circle on the second floor can feel a powerful eldritch force.

Winter's Heart

Encounter Level 3 (750 XP)

Setup

This encounter takes place when the PCs first interact with the gemstone at the top of the tower. The spirit of winter contained within comes forth from the gemstone to defend it. Show the players the illustration on page 22 depicting the gem and its guardian.

Spirit of Winter (W)

When the PCs trigger the gemstone, read:

The gemstone pulses with blue light and a wave of energy knocks you back. A thin stream of white mist issues forth from the center of the sapphire, coalescing into the form of a massive, thickly muscled, white-furred monster. Thick mist rolls off the creature's hide, congealing the air into heavy frost that clings to everything nearby. The creature roars, and in its howl you can hear the pure elemental fury at the heart of a raging blizzard. The sapphire continues to crackle with energy, the blue light pulsing rhythmically, as if it were the beating of the very heart of winter.

Tactics

The spirit of winter focuses its attacks on whoever is closest to (or dealing the most damage to) it. Perhaps the most dangerous tactic available to the spirit of winter is to try and position itself so that its *freezing burst* includes one or more characters who are within 2 squares of the tower's edge. A fall from the top of the tower deals 3d10 damage.

Spirit of Winter (W) **Level 3 Solo Brute**
Large fey humanoid (cold) XP 750

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
Choke Frost Aura (Cold) aura 2 (not active while bloodied); creatures that start their turns or enter the area of the aura are slowed (save ends).
HP 250; **Bloodied** 125 (see also *bloodied burst*)
AC 18; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16
Resist 15 cold
Saving Throws +5
Speed 6 (ice walk)
Action Points 2

Slam (standard; at-will) **Cold**
Reach 2; +6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 plus 1d6 cold damage (plus an extra 1d6 cold damage against a creature that is under the effects of *choke frost*).

Frost Fury (standard; at-will) **Cold**
The spirit of winter makes two slam attacks.

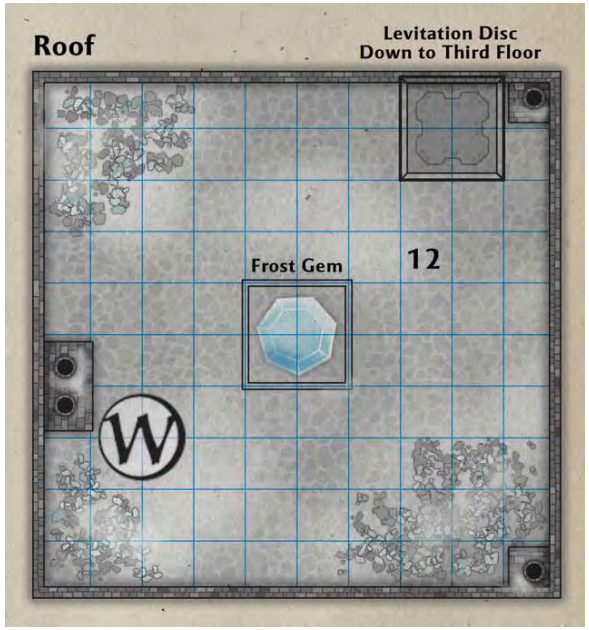
Blast of Cold (minor; at-will) **Cold**
Ranged 10 from frost gem; two targets; +4 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 1 cold damage. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Freezing Burst (standard; recharge ⚅) **Cold**
Close burst 3; +4 vs. Reflex; 1d6+ 4 cold damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone. *Miss:* The target is pushed 1 square and not knocked prone.

Bloodied Burst (when first bloodied; encounter) **Cold**
The spirit of winter's *freezing burst* recharges, and the spirit of winter uses it immediately.

Gem Bound
The spirit of winter is bound to the frost gem. Attacking either damages the spirit of winter, and when the spirit of winter reaches 0 hit points or fewer, the gem is also destroyed. The gem's defenses are identical to the spirit of winter's, and the gem has resist 5 all.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** telepathy 20
Skills Athletics +15
Str 18 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+1) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 18 (+5) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+0)



The spirit of winter does not pursue PCs who use the levitation platform to retreat back into the tower. However, if the PCs completely disengage, the spirit of winter goes back inside the gemstone, where it gains regeneration 10, meaning that it needs only 2 minutes to become fully healed. (The spirit of winter cannot use this tactic as long as there are PC combatants on the roof of the tower.)

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Rubble: The indicated squares on the map are filled with broken shards of ice and stone. These squares are treated as difficult terrain.

Choke Frost: This light, white mist congeals into thick ice as creatures or other sources of heat move through it. Each time a creature enters a square of

choke frost, it takes a –1 penalty to speed. As a move action, a creature can negate this penalty. Creatures that have the cold keyword are immune to this effect. (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 67)

Development

Once the PCs have defeated the spirit of winter, the magical prison of ice shatters and collapses.

Read the following:

The spirit of winter clutches at its chest and howls in agony. A spiderweb of tiny cracks spreads across the sapphire's surface. Moments later, the next pulse of blue energy surges forward from the gemstone, but its structure is no longer able to contain the elemental forces. The sapphire explodes, tiny shards scattering in all directions. The spirit of winter's form wavers and blurs and then it collapses into itself in a cloud of white mist.

The icy walls that surround Draigdurroch Tower begin to shudder and tremble. With a great roar, like the sound of a gigantic waterfall made of glass, huge chunks of ice begin breaking apart from the frozen cocoon and falling to the ground below, where they shatter. Within a few seconds, the entire barrier has splintered and collapsed.

The sky above the tower begins to grow lighter as the gray clouds scatter and disperse. The swirling snow stops falling and the howling of the chill wind falls silent for the first time since you set foot in the Dire Wood. The world appears suddenly peaceful, as if nature recognizes that its proper course has been restored.

After they have destroyed the gemstone and broken the fey curse, the PCs can rest in the tower if they wish, although it takes many days before the frozen surfaces return to a normal temperature, so sleeping inside the tower feels like sleeping inside a meat locker.

The bitter wind and raging storms outside cease immediately when the gem is destroyed, and the outside temperature returns to normal within a few days. Of course, it takes some time for all the accumulated snow and ice that has built up in the region near the tower to melt, and as that happens, the area remains dangerous.

About the Author

Over the last five years, **Sean Molley** has done a lot of RPG writing (both d20 and non-d20) for Paradigm Concepts and directed the *Living Arcanis* organized-play campaign. Sean currently serves as a Global Administrator for the RPGA's *Living Forgotten Realms* campaign. In his day job, Sean works on large-scale databases, which is a lot less exciting than working on large-scale D&D games. Sean lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with his very understanding wife (who is fortunately also a gamer). This is his first appearance in *Dungeon* magazine.

EPIC
21–30

Ziggurat Beyond Time

by David Noonan

In Ziggurat Beyond Time, the PCs venture into a mythic ziggurat for their own reasons. Opposing the PCs are insectile creatures known as sebaceans, which came from the Far Realm to prepare for a foretold invasion of the cosmos. Ritually bound creatures, including a dracolich, also call the ziggurat home. Further, undead remnants of the ziggurat's original builders restlessly guard the structure's lower burial chambers.

This adventure is a stepping-stone into epic play. It's confined to a single site and the encounters are self-contained. Since every campaign is unique, this adventure is also designed for you to customize (see the sidebar).

Ultimately, exploration of the ziggurat can lead in different directions. When this adventure is over, the PCs can follow the destiny of the Deluvian Hourglass, uncover and perhaps thwart an invasion from the Far Realm, or learn more about the mysterious lost civilization that built the ziggurat in the first place.

illustrations by Rob Alexander and Ben Wootten
cartography by Sean Macdonald

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Background

Thousands of years ago, the jungle surrounding the ziggurat was the center of a vast and advanced civilization, with a language and culture alien to the jungle-dwellers of today. This civilization built a number of great marble ziggurats used for religious worship, magical research, and burial. As is the way of empires, the civilization collapsed.

The civilization's ruins remain in the world. At least one of its ziggurats survived largely intact. It did so because it drifts in time and space, holding one of the fallen civilization's greatest treasures: the *Deluvian Hourglass*. This artifact, created at the dawn of time, has an important role to play in the end of the world. The builders of the ziggurat locked the hourglass up to forestall anyone meddling with it and bringing about a premature apocalypse.

Long after the ziggurat builders' empire fell, warped creatures known as the sebaceans found the ancient pyramid. They had a very different idea: seize the *Deluvian Hourglass* and hold it for the Mad Architects, their masters from the Far Realm. Sebaceans care little for the affairs of those in this cosmos, mortal or immortal. They await only the arrival of the Mad Architects. When the Mad Architects appear, the sebaceans plan to present them with the *Deluvian Hourglass*. Then the sebaceans hope to help the Mad Architects twist and mold reality.

The Mad Architects might arrive tomorrow, or they could arrive in a century. The sebaceans don't know how long they must wait. But they're not subject to normal perceptions of time. Eternally patient and hopelessly malevolent, and aided by the ziggurat's space outside normal time, they endure. They while away the time reshaping apes from the jungle into their servitors.

Getting the PCs Involved

PCs might explore the ziggurat for one or more of the following reasons, or for another purpose unique to your campaign.

Deluvian Hourglass

Because the *Deluvian Hourglass* has magical ties to the end of the world, it might figure prominently in any number of earth-shattering plots that the PCs are trying to thwart or advance. Deluvius constructed the hourglass because he believed the primordials would destroy the world after eliminating their rivals, the gods. But the end of the world needn't necessarily be at the hands of the primordials. The hourglass fundamentally just wants to be there when it happens.

Ritual divinations or particularly thorough research can reveal that the *Deluvian Hourglass* is within the ziggurat. That brings the PCs to the adventure site and gives them a simple goal: take the hourglass.

Possible Quest: Deliver the *Deluvian Hourglass* to an important NPC patron. This could be a council of powerful mages, the high priests of a particular god, or another mighty ally that uses the PCs for its most important missions.

Mad Architects

The PCs might have squared off against the sebaceans or other servitors of the otherworldly menace known as the Mad Architects before. Divinations might have revealed that the Mad Architects plan to launch an invasion of the world soon. And if you're starting a new campaign with this adventure, the sebaceans' weird masters might pique the PCs' curiosity, fueling an entire "Stop the Mad Architects" storyline.

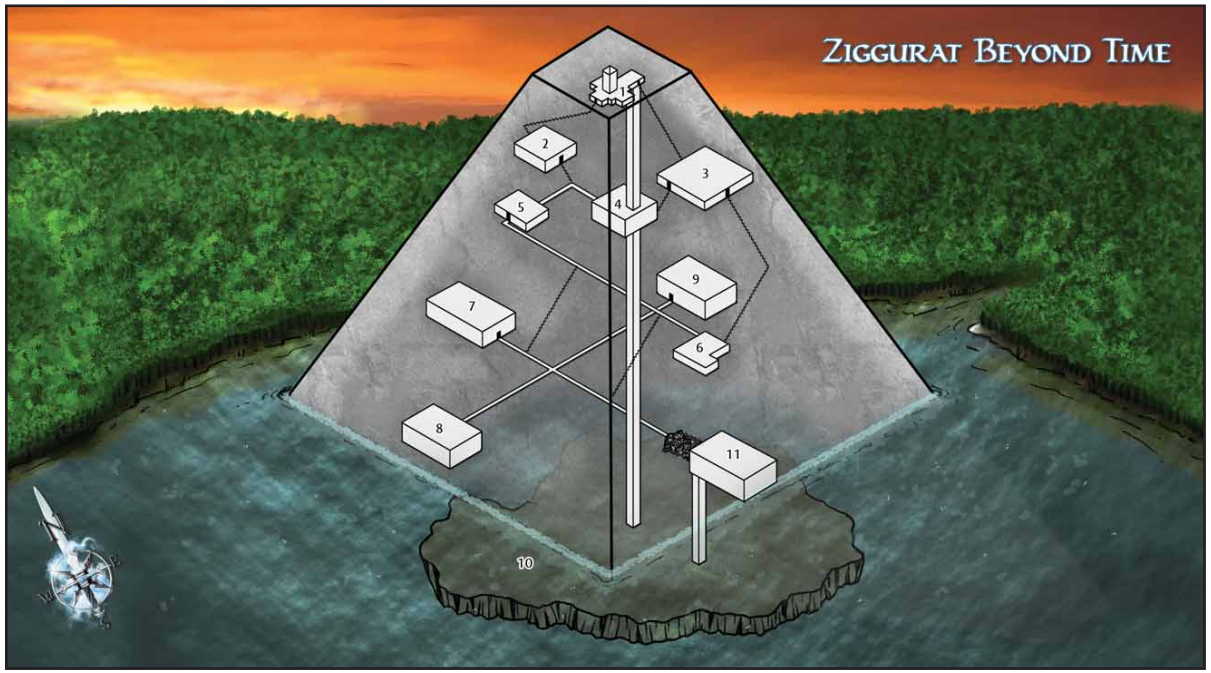
Possible Quest: Find out why the sebaceans are guarding an ancient ziggurat with no known significance beyond its strange magical properties.

"Return to your doomed world, fools!"

Ancient Civilization

This adventure hook requires more work, but you have more "plot room" to work with. As written, not much is revealed about the empire that built the ziggurat in the first place. But that's just an excuse for you to fill in the details. Who were these people, what did they know, and why do the PCs care about them now? The mere existence of the ziggurat suggests that they were accomplished in feats of magic and architecture. The PCs could be literal or philosophical descendants of that ancient empire, trying to learn more about it. Maybe they want to restore it to its former glory.

Possible Quest: Fully explore the ziggurat and eliminate the monsters that have infested it since the empire fell. Perhaps even claim it as a base of operations.



The Ziggurat

A crystal lake surrounds the ziggurat in the world, and no matter where else it is. The lake is shallow, because centuries ago it was an artificial pool dug by the ziggurat builders. Over the intervening time, the ziggurat has settled somewhat, and the lake floor has several new layers of sediment. In the world, small creeks from the surrounding jungle feed the lake, which slowly empties out into a nearby river.

The lake is 10 feet deep at its shore, and it's 20 to 30 feet deep at the center, near the ziggurat. It has no life in it, but the water is fine.

Ziggurat Exterior

The ziggurat is constructed of massive light gray stone blocks connected to each other with a tongue-and-groove system. Vegetation doesn't grow on the pyramid's exterior due to the energy from its days as a place of great magical power. Each layer of stone on the ziggurat is 10 feet high. A stairway runs up the south face of the 400-foot- structure, and that's the only architectural feature of note.

Ziggurat Interior

At first glance, it might seem difficult to navigate the ziggurat—so many chambers on different levels, with long staircases connecting them. But your job is made much easier by the magic of the ziggurat builders. The ziggurat warps space and is much larger on the inside than on the outside.

Time also flows differently within the structure—but exactly how is up to you. The default assumption is that time passes more slowly than in the outside world. Further, some aspects of change, such as plants growing on the ziggurat surface, simply never happen.

Ceilings

Most ceilings are 15 feet above the floor.

Passages

Each chamber is a quarter-mile or more from its nearest neighbors, so it's a couple minutes of uninterrupted walking from one encounter to the next. PCs should figure out that's something is amiss almost immediately. When they make their descent from room 1 to either room 2 or room 3, they realize they've descended almost a thousand feet, which would put them far underground.

The quarter-mile applies to all hallways from chamber to chamber except for the long corridors that connect rooms 7, 8, and 9—and lead to room 11, although a cave-in blocks that way. Each of those is a quarter-mile from the intersection of the north-south and east-west corridors, so it's about a half-mile walk from any one of those rooms to the others.

The ziggurat does have one path that obeys the normal rules of space. A shaft connects rooms 1, 4, and 10. It's 400 feet deep, the height of the ziggurat itself.

Stairs

All stairs are difficult terrain, and they have gray paving stones for their treads.

CUSTOMIZE THIS ADVENTURE!

Tailor *Ziggurat Beyond Time* according to your world and campaign. The ziggurat's history and significance are up to you, and it can be as detailed as you desire. Names and features presented herein are placeholders for you to make your own. Add information within the adventure—perhaps a clue in the mosaic inside room 8—that suggests another ziggurat the PCs can visit when they're done with this one. Create more meaningful social interactions with the undead creatures in rooms 7 and 8, because they hail from the heyday of the ziggurat. Change specific features—such as the statues in rooms 5 and 6, and the mosaics in rooms 8, 9, and 11—to match your story. Add features to other rooms that work with what you intend. Feel free to even change the history and purpose of the *Deluvian Hourglass*. This setting is yours to make what you will.

Location

You can locate the ziggurat as you like. It could be in more than one place at once, connected to several locales or even planes. (Hints of this possibility exist in the adventure.) Perhaps it only appears in its worldly location at specific times. Foreknowledge of one of these times could be why the PCs come to the ziggurat now.

Treasure

Ziggurat Beyond Time employs the "parcel" technique of treasure distribution described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Use these eleven treasure parcels.

Parcel 1: Magic item, level 25
Parcel 2: Magic item, level 24
Parcel 3: Magic item, level 23
Parcel 4: Magic item, level 22
Parcel 5: Magic item, level 22
Parcel 6: 1,800 pp
Parcel 7: 1,000 gp, four jewel-encrusted statuettes of religious or magical significance to the ancient civilization that created the ziggurat (worth 15,000 gp each), and a two-foot-tall carved titan-bone obelisk with ever-changing magic runes (50,000 gp)
Parcel 8: 700 pp and a perfect, fist-sized star sapphire (5,000 gp)
Parcel 9: 500 pp and a *potion of recovery*
Parcel 10: *Two potions of vitality* and another perfect, fist-sized star sapphire (5,000 gp)
Parcel 11: 2,500 gp plus three flawless platinum urns with gold inlays (worth 7,500 gp each)

Distributing the Loot

Consult your players' magic item wish lists, then apportion the following parcels into these rooms. It's possible that the monsters make use of the magic items in their rooms. Decide that ahead of time.

Room 4: Two parcels.
Room 5: One parcel.
Room 6: One parcel.
Room 7: One parcel.
Room 8: One parcel.
Room 9: Two parcels.
Room 10: One parcel.
Room 11: Two parcels.

1. Star Observatory

Encounter Level 21 (16,000 XP)

Setup

2 sebacean guardians (Gu)
2 sebacean gliders (Gl)
8 sebacean mutant apes (A)

Sebaceans use this room as a guard post. Because the ceilings are low in the ledge areas, the PCs can't see the sebaceans and the apes from the top of the ziggurat—don't show the monsters until they join the battle. The creatures attack when someone steps on the dome or descends to the floor of the main chamber.

When the PCs look down into room 1, read:

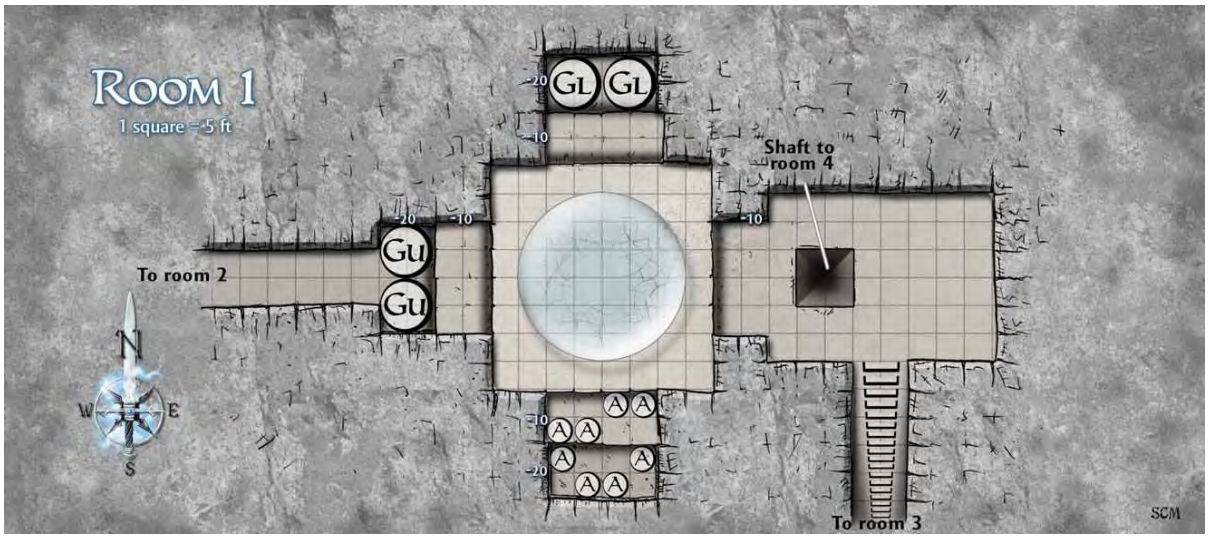
A crystalline dome (open end down) hangs near the ceiling of the chamber below. You can't see what's holding it there.

The dome itself is about 30 feet across at its outer rim, and it's almost perfectly transparent. Etched into the surface are arcs connecting small glowing motes—like candles trapped in glass. The crystal also has some small cracks in it.

Below the dome is an empty, square chamber. In the center of the north, south, east, and west walls are 20-foot wide openings, each about five feet high. Darkness and the angle from the pyramid's top prevent you from seeing what's down there.

When a PC steps onto the dome surface, read:

The dome reverberates with a low, deep ring—like that of a great temple bell, but softer. Scurrying comes from below you.



Features of the Area

Illumination: Sunlight from the opening in the roof provides bright light in the main chamber and dim light in all the initial ledges (-10 ft.). The lower ledges (-20 ft.) and similarly low areas are dark.

Star Dome: This crystalline dome floats near the ceiling, suspended by magic. It's only a 5-foot drop from the top of the ziggurat exterior onto any of the four squares in the center of the dome.

Only those four squares are easy to stand on. The dome surface is slippery. It takes a DC 20 Acrobatics check to move into a dome square surrounding the central four.

The dome is also fragile, indicated by the cracks. PCs who remain in the same square for two turns in a row break through that dome square. A falling PC can attempt a saving throw to catch the edge. If a PC falls, he or she falls 30 feet.

Climbing other parts of the dome requires a successful DC 32 Athletics check.

From below, the dome magnifies the sky. The builders of the ziggurat used the top chamber as an observatory (Arcana DC 18 to discern this).

Ledges: Beyond room are ledges to the north, south, east, and west. It's a 10-foot drop down them and a DC 25 Athletics check to climb them. Secondary ledges are another 10 feet down. The ceiling stays 15 feet above the ledges, so only a 5-foot gap exists between the edge of the ledge and the ceiling in the lower area.

Shaft: It's a 60-foot drop to room 4. The shaft (Athletics DC 25 to climb) drops another 300 feet into room 10.

Portraying the Monsters

The apes are bestial and practically rabid, screeching as they attack and howling in pain when struck. But the sebaceans have a more alien mien. They stare at the PCs with their compound eyes, tilt their heads and ripple their mouth-mandibles. The guardians give basic commands to the gliders in Deep Speech. PCs who speak Deep Speech understand terse commands like "get the ones on the dome" and "focus on the spellcasters in the back." Others hear only snatches of sinister gibberish. If the PCs use Deep Speech to speak to the monsters, the guardians noticeably flinch but they don't converse.

2 Sebacean Guardians (Gu) **Level 21 Soldier**
Large aberrant magical beast XP 3,200 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 199; **Bloodied** 99
AC 37; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 33
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, climb 4

⊕ **Limb Blades** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage and until the sebacean guardian's next turn, when the target shifts, the sebacean guardian can make a melee basic attack against it.

⸸ **Heuristic Strike** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 1d10 + 10 damage. One condition that a save can end on the sebacean guardian ends, and the target gains that condition (save ends).

Threatening Reach
A sebacean guardian can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 26 (+18) **Dex** 14 (+12) **Wis** 23 (+16)
Con 23 (+16) **Int** 12 (+11) **Cha** 16 (+13)

2 Sebacean Gliders (Gl) **Level 20 Skirmisher**
Large aberrant magical beast XP 2,800 each

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 191; **Bloodied** 95
AC 34; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 31
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, fly 10; see also *reactive teleport*

⊕ **Limb Blades** (standard; at-will)
+25 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage.

⸸ **Flyby Attack** (standard; at-will)
The sebacean glider flies up to 10 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The glider doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

⸸ **Reactive Teleport** (immediate reaction, when the glider takes damage; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
The glider teleports 2 squares and attacks an adjacent creature; +25 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage.

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Stealth +23
Str 19 (+14) **Dex** 26 (+18) **Wis** 21 (+15)
Con 23 (+16) **Int** 12 (+11) **Cha** 14 (+12)

8 Sebacean Mutant Apes (A) **Level 18 Minion**
Medium aberrant beast XP 500 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30
Speed 8, climb 8

⊕ **Limb Blades** (standard; at-will)
+23 vs. AC; 9 damage.

Dying Howl (when reduced to 0 hit points)
Each other sebacean mutant ape within 10 squares gains +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn. This bonus stacks with that from other sebacean mutant apes' *dying howls*.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 25 (+16) **Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 21 (+14)
Con 23 (+15) **Int** 5 (+6) **Cha** 15 (+12)

Tactics

The mutant apes delay if necessary to go after the guardians, who need the room to get into advantageous positions. Apes climb easily to the upper level or even onto the dome, using their climb speed. When they do attack, the apes spread out, worming into spaces among their larger masters to get at the PCs.

The sebaceans can climb or fly, so the ledges pose no difficulty for them. The guardians get into melee with as many PCs as they possibly can, while the gliders harry PCs atop the dome or still outside the ziggurat.

Note which effect a guardian saves against so it can impose that effect on a foe in subsequent rounds with its *heuristic strike*. The gliders teleport the first time they take damage every turn.

The sebaceans and mutant apes fight until slain. Sebacean guardians don't leave the center chamber, but the gliders chase fleeing PCs for a round or two before retreating back into the ziggurat. Mutant apes also try to chase PCs, but each one gives up after a round.

2. Blood Altar

Encounter Level 21 (15,900 XP)

Setup

2 sebacean gorgers (Go)
1 sebacean gleaner (Gl)
6 sebacean mutant apes (A)

While fighting, the PCs and the sebaceans have to deal with the increasingly deadly floor hazard.

When the PCs reach either doorway, read:

Three of the strange insect creatures—two green-and-black ones and a pale white one that glows slightly—stand atop a low platform in the center of the room. Around them, in a ring, caper six apes with grotesque insectile limbs.

A channel engraved in the floor glows pale blue. It twists and turns from each corner of the room, eventually leading up the platform stairs. Three low stone biers rest atop the platform.

Two staircases lead into this room—one of which you used—downward to the south and upward to the north.

Blood Channel

The line marked on the floor is a two-inch deep channel cut in the stone floor. When a creature on the center platform takes damage, its blood fills the channel and starts to spread outward. The first instance of damage fills all the channel spaces on the center platform with blood. Each time afterward that a creature on the center platform takes damage, 6 more squares fill with blood in each direction.

If a creature starts its turn in a square with a filled blood channel or moves into such a square during its turn, it takes 10 damage. Creatures atop the central low stone bier don't take this damage. Once the blood reaches the small pipes in the floor at the end of the path, the channels remain active for one hour before returning to their blue state. The blood pours out into the lake that surrounds the ziggurat, turning it a bloody red for 12 hours.

Features of the Area

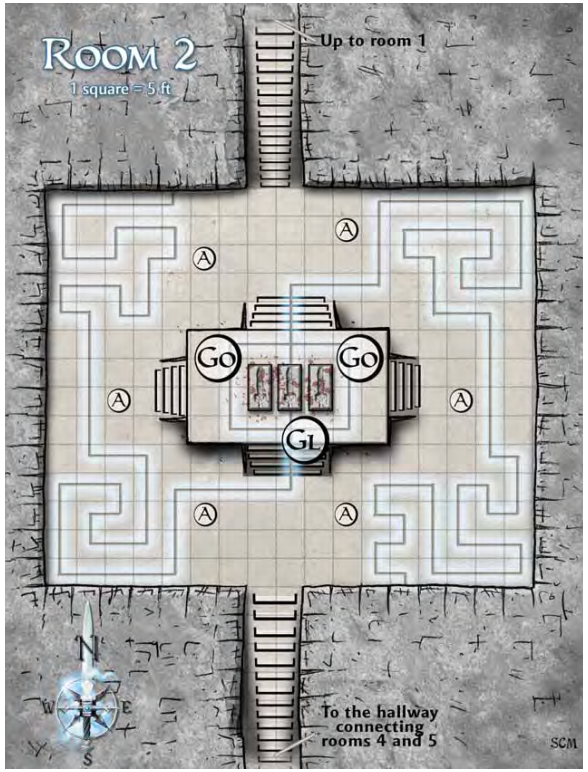
Illumination: The path in the floor glows a faint blue and provides dim light before the fight starts. Once the floor channels become active, they glow a bright red along the edges, noticeably brightening the room. The gleaner is luminescent, providing dim light in adjacent squares.

Platform: The top of this flat area is 5 feet from the floor. Those on it can attack those on the floor, and vice versa.

Platform Stairs: These stairs are gradual.

Southern Stairway: A creature forced onto and knocked prone on these stairs must save or fall down them 2d4 squares. The creature takes 1d6 damage per 2 squares so fallen.

Stone Biers: The three biers on the center platform are made of white marble and have a humanoid-shaped depression and faint reddish-brown stains on their top surface. Sacrificial victims were placed here, and the victims' blood powered the magic of the floor channel and eventually turned the lake red. The sebaceans don't perform sacrifice for its own sake, but they've experimented using apes to figure out how the floor channels work.



Portraying the Monsters

The gorgers do little other that make low, disjointed roars when they're particularly pleased. They speak and understand Deep Speech, but they don't talk during the battle. For a gorger, language is only a means by which gleaners give them orders.

The gleaner, on the other hand, is an opportunity for you to reveal a little about the sebaceans. It can speak Common in its dual-toned voice. The gleaner delivers vile oaths every round, first in Deep Speech, and then in Common on the following round if it doesn't seem like the PCs understood it. When it's bloodied, the gleaner's dialogue gets more fatalistic.

Here are some examples:

- ✦ *"Turn back before the sublime potency of the sebaceans!"*
- ✦ *"Fools! You'll be entombed here and forgotten forever!"*
- ✦ *"You cannot hope to defeat all of us!"*
- ✦ *"When one sebacean falls, the Mad Architects send two more to take its place!"*
- ✦ *"You cannot postpone . . . the inevitable . . ."* is fine for a final statement.

The apes do their screeching and howling. They seem as rabid as ever.

2 Sebacean Gorgers (Go) **Level 22 Brute**
Large aberrant magical beast XP 4,150 each

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 258; **Bloodied** 129; see also *bloodied fury*
AC 34; **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 30
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, climb 4

⊕ **Limb Blades** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +25 (+27 while bloodied) vs. AC; 2d10 + 8 (2d10 + 10 while bloodied) damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Blade Shred (standard; recharges when an adjacent enemy becomes bloodied)
Close burst 1; +24 (+26 while bloodied) vs. AC; 2d10 + 8 (2d10 + 10 while bloodied) damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Bloodied Fury
The sebacean gorger gains +2 to attack rolls and damage rolls while bloodied (included above).

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 26 (+19) **Dex** 18 (+15) **Wis** 19 (+15)
Con 28 (+20) **Int** 14 (+13) **Cha** 15 (+13)

Sebacean Gleaner (Gl) **Level 23 Controller**
Large aberrant magical beast XP 5,100

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +18; darkvision
HP 215; **Bloodied** 107
AC 37; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 36
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, climb 4

⊕ **Limb Blades** (standard; at-will)
+28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage.

Toxic Spittle (standard; at-will)
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Reflex, 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Cocoon Prison (standard; recharges when no enemy is restrained by this power)
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 acid damage, and the target is restrained (save ends).

Hypnotic Toxin (standard; recharge ⁞⁞)
Reach 2; +27 vs. Will; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target is dominated (save ends).

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +23, History +23
Str 19 (+15) **Dex** 19 (+15) **Wis** 24 (+18)
Con 23 (+17) **Int** 25 (+18) **Cha** 27 (+19)

6 Sebacean Mutant Apes (A) **Level 18 Minion**
Medium aberrant beast XP 500 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30
Speed 8, climb 8

⊕ **Limb Blades** (standard; at-will)
+23 vs. AC; 9 damage.

Dying Howl (when reduced to 0 hit points)
Each other sebacean mutant ape within 10 squares gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn. This bonus stacks with that from other sebacean mutant apes' *dying howls*.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 25 (+16) **Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 21 (+14)
Con 23 (+15) **Int** 5 (+6) **Cha** 15 (+12)

Tactics

From atop the central platform, the sebacean gleaner orders the gorgers and apes forward. Then it uses *cocoon prison* in the first round, and *toxic spittle* as soon as it can in subsequent turn. The only thing that can make it leave the center platform is the prospect of delivering *hypnotic toxin*. After doing so, it scurries back behind the gorgers as soon as it can.

The gorgers stay between the PCs and the gleaner. Mutant apes engage in the gaps the gorgers leave open, surrounding the PCs or guarding the gleaners' flanks. They also work to provide the gorgers with combat advantage by flanking the PCs. The apes don't allow the PCs to run around the gorgers.

None of the monsters are immune to the effects of the blood channels. However, they do know how the channels work. They also know that standing on the central bier renders them immune.

All monsters fight until slain. They don't pursue the PCs beyond either stairway. If the PCs retreat, the gleaner says, in Common, "Return to your doomed world, fools!"

"You cannot postpone . . . the inevitable . . ."

3. Bound Elemental

Encounter Level 21 (18,800 XP)

Setup

3 sebacean guardians (Gu)
1 sebacean gleaner (Gl)
1 earthwind ravager (E)

The challenge in this room is to try to slow down or stop the sebaceans before they destroy all the obelisks, then (assuming the sebaceans succeed) deal with an angry earthwind ravager—potentially in a very dark room. Determine what the PCs' light sources are at the start of the encounter, because the room might plunge into darkness when the last obelisk shatters.

When the PCs reach any of the doorways, read:

An animate tornado of dust and rock is contained within a circle of brightly glowing runes in the center of this room. Lightning arcs between the tornado creature and the tips of four crystalline obelisks—one in each corner of the room. This creates the only bright light in the chamber. Four sebaceans stand just outside the circle: a pale white one that glows slightly and three red-brown ones.

Four staircases lead into this room. They go downward to the east, south, and west, and upward to the north.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The lightning provides bright light. Once the earthwind ravager is freed, those lights are gone and the only illumination in the room is what the PCs are using, plus the natural luminescence of the sebacean gleaner (dim light in squares adjacent to it).

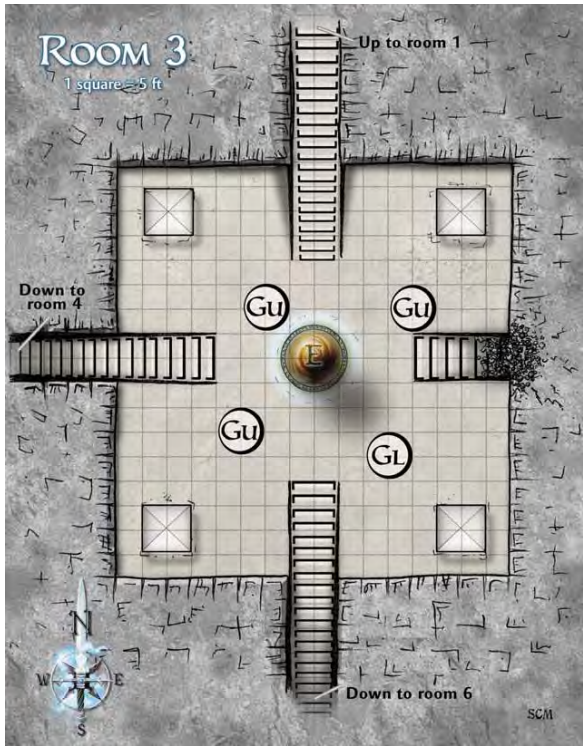
Binding Circle: This silver-inlaid binding circle has two unbroken parallel lines along the circumference and a long line of glowing runes. It binds the earthwind ravager inside but doesn't prevent it from attacking. As the crystal obelisks shatter, the runes disappear. When they're all gone, the earthwind ravager is free.

Crystal Obelisks: These obelisks are crystal monoliths created by gleaners using their crystal thread. But the obelisks are hollow, and it takes only 10 damage to shatter them. When that happens, the lightning bolt arcing between the obelisk tip and the earthwind ravager disappears, and one quarter of the runes in the binding circle go dark.

When an obelisk shatters, broken crystal covers its original space and all squares adjacent to that space. This is difficult terrain. Any creature knocked prone in such a square takes 1d10 damage.

Downward Staircases: A creature forced onto and knocked prone on these stairs must save or fall down them 2d4 squares (maximum 4 on the eastern staircase). The creature takes 1d6 damage per 2 squares so fallen.

Eastern Staircase: This stairway leads down for only 4 squares, then ends in a dense cluster of broken stone blocks. The collapse extends for hundreds of feet.



Portraying the Monsters

The sebacean guardians go about their grim business, grunting as they go. The sebacean gleaner uses Deep Speech to give tactical orders to the guardians, and it switches to Common to deliver dire warnings like "You cannot hope to invade our home and live!" and "We will not know true joy until the end of the world, but we take grim satisfaction in consuming those who would destroy us!" Feel free to expand on or truncate these battle cries, depending on your sense of pacing and drama.

When released, the earthwind ravager shouts (in Primordial), "Free! I am free! Free . . . to slay!" After that point, it might be saying something, but it's hard to hear over the roar of its own winds and the crash of stones smashing against one another.

3 Sebacean Guardians (Gu)	Level 21 Soldier
Large aberrant magical beast	XP 3,200 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 199; **Bloodied** 99
AC 37; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 33
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, climb 4

Limb Blades (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage and until the sebacean guardian's next turn, when the target shifts, the sebacean guardian can make a melee basic attack against it.

Heuristic Strike (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 1d10 + 10 damage. One condition that a save can end on the sebacean guardian ends, and the target gains that condition (save ends).

Threatening Reach
A sebacean guardian can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 26 (+18) **Dex** 14 (+12) **Wis** 23 (+16)
Con 23 (+16) **Int** 12 (+11) **Cha** 16 (+13)

Earthwind Ravager (E)	Level 23 Controller
Large elemental magical beast (air, earth)	XP 5,100

Initiative +21 **Senses** Perception +14
HP 219; **Bloodied** 109
AC 37; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 29
Immune disease, petrification, poison
Speed fly 8 (hover)

Slam (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +26 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 10 damage.

Wind Devil (standard; sustain minor; at-will)
The earthwind ravager causes swirling wind to rise up around the target. Ranged 5; +26 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the ravager's next turn. The creature can sustain the effect as a minor action, dealing 2d8 damage to the target (no attack roll required) and keeping it immobilized until the end of the ravager's next turn.

Whirlwind (standard; at-will)
Close burst 1; +24 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 10 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Buffeting Blast (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚃)
Close blast 3; +24 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 8 damage, and the target is stunned until the end of the earthwind ravager's next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Skills Stealth +26
Str 24 (+18) **Dex** 30 (+21) **Wis** 17 (+14)
Con 27 (+19) **Int** 6 (+9) **Cha** 16 (+14)

Sebacean Gleaner (Gl)	Level 23 Controller
Large aberrant magical beast	XP 5,100

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +18; darkvision
HP 215; **Bloodied** 107
AC 37; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 36
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, climb 4

Limb Blades (standard; at-will)
+28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage.

Toxic Spittle (standard; at-will)
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Reflex, 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Cocoon Prison (standard; recharges when no enemy is restrained by this power)
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 acid damage, and the target is restrained (save ends).

Hypnotic Toxin (standard; recharge ⚃)
Reach 2; +27 vs. Will; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target is dominated (save ends).

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +23, History +23
Str 19 (+15) **Dex** 19 (+15) **Wis** 24 (+18)
Con 23 (+17) **Int** 25 (+18) **Cha** 27 (+19)

Tactics

The sebacean gleaner says in Deep Speech "Shatter the obelisks! Free the servant!" as soon as it detects danger. Then it launches *toxic spittle* if the PCs are more than 5 squares away, or *cocoon prison* if a PCs is close enough. During its second turn, it moves as close to the center of the room as it can manage, without putting itself at too much risk, and uses whichever ranged attack power is available. If possible, it saves its *hypnotic toxin* for after the room goes dark, when it's the only readily visible target.

The sebacean guardians ignore PCs for the first round or two, each moving to a crystal obelisk and shattering it with a single blow. Once they've destroyed all the obelisks, the guardians try to move between the PCs and the gleaner.

The earthwind ravager attacks as many PCs as possible with its *buffeting blast*—even if a sebacean or two gets caught in the blast area. Then it uses *whirlwind* if a PC is next to it at the start of a turn. If no PC is adjacent, it employs *wind devil* against a PC with a light source.

If the room is plunged into darkness, the earthwind ravager moves around randomly. Roll 1d8 for direction and move it until it's adjacent to a creature or a wall, then use *whirlwind* every turn.

All monsters fight until slain. The sebaceans don't leave this room, but the earthwind ravager pursues PCs if they flee toward room 1. If they flee in another direction, the ravager departs the ziggurat for good once the PCs are out of its sight, smashing the observatory dome on its way out of the structure.

4. Dracolich Lair

Encounter Level 23 (25,500 XP)

Setup

1 blackfire dracolich (D)

A dracolich bound by ritual to assist the sebaceans spends its time here.

When the PCs reach any doorway, read:

A pyramid looms here, and atop it is a skeletal dragon surrounded by blue and ebony flames. On each side of the pyramid, a stairway leads up to the creature. The bones of humanoids cover the pyramid's slopes.

Along the south wall is a cluster of gray eggs, each about two feet tall. The northwest corner of the room has a series of basins embedded in it, each dripping a glowing green liquid into a lower one.

Two passages lead into this room from the north and east. A hole in the high ceiling in the southern part of the room corresponds to a 10-foot wide shaft in the floor.

Tactics

Because the dracolich is a solo controller, brace yourself for a long battle. Realize that with more than a thousand hit points at your disposal, you can afford to play patiently and brashly. With that much between it and destruction, the dracolich isn't afraid to provoke opportunity attacks to attack just as it likes.

Turn One: The dracolich rises, crouches, and snarls, its hollow insides flaring with blue-black fire as it uses *frightful presence*. It aims to penalize PC attack rolls for the rest of the encounter this way. Then it uses an action point to employ its *breath weapon*. If it needs to do so, it flies to a better position, but it's probably just fine atop the pyramid.

At this point, the flow of the battle might make specific tactics pointless. Consider these points when using the dracolich's powers.

Rukaleth, Blackfire Dracolich (D) Level 23 Solo Controller
Gargantuan natural magical beast (dragon, undead) XP 25,500

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +21; darkvision
HP 1,095; **Bloodied** 547; see also *bloodied breath*
AC 39; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 36
Immune disease, fear, poison; **Resist** 35 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Saving Throws +5
Speed 8, fly 10 (clumsy)
Action Points 2

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Reach 4; +28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage. Against a stunned target, this attack deals an extra 3d8 necrotic damage.

Mesmerizing Glare (immediate interrupt, when an enemy makes a melee attack against the dracolich; at-will) ✦ **Fear**
Close blast 3; +26 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of the blackfire dracolich's next turn. *Miss:* The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against the blackfire dracolich until the end of the blackfire dracolich's next turn.

Blackfire (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire, Necrotic**
Close blast 5; automatic hit; 2d8 + 8 necrotic damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Breath Weapon (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic**
The blackfire dracolich breathes a coruscating blast of necrotic energy. Close blast 9; +26 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target is stunned until the end of the blackfire dracolich's next turn. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is not stunned. *Hit or Miss:* The target loses any necrotic resistance it has (save ends).

Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter)
The blackfire dracolich's breath weapon recharges, and the blackfire dracolich uses it immediately.

Frightful Presence (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fear**
Close burst 20; targets enemies; +26 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of the blackfire dracolich's next turn. *Aftereffect:* The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Arcana +20, Endurance +24, History +20, Insight +21, Intimidate +19, Religion +20

Str 29 (+20)	**Dex** 25 (+18)	**Wis** 20 (+16)
Con 27 (+19)	**Int** 18 (+15)	**Cha** 17 (+14)

Action Point: The dracolich saves the other action point for the turn just after it uses its *bloodied breath*. On that turn, it takes two actions, preferably *breath weapon* and *blackfire*, one of these and a bite, or two bites. It might instead save the action point until after it's bloodied, for when it can make a *breath weapon* and *blackfire* combination. Just be careful to use the action point before the creature is destroyed.

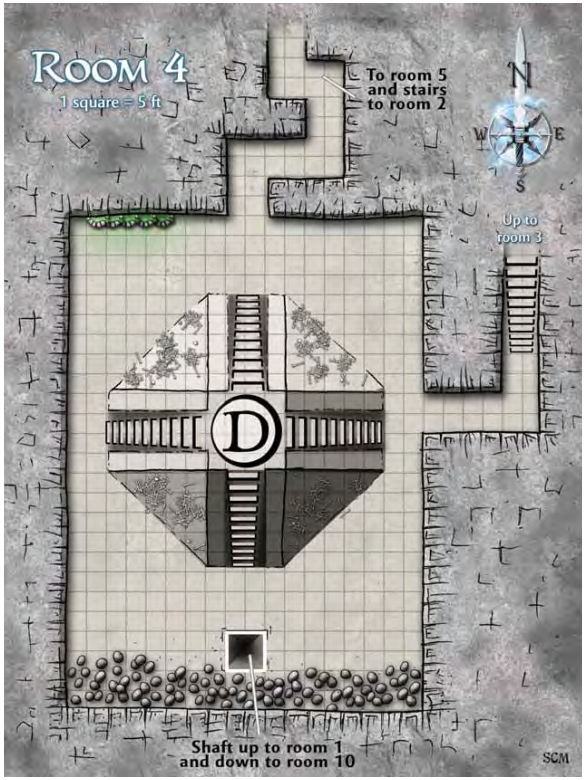
Bite: This is the dracolich's last option on any given turn. It bites only when it must.

Blackfire: This is the dracolich's most likely action on its second turn. It uses this power whenever it recharges and the *breath weapon* isn't available.

Breath Weapon: The most potent part of the breath weapon is the stunned condition, not the damage. Try to catch as many PCs in the blast as possible, maneuvering and even provoking opportunity attacks to do so. The dracolich pays attention to who among the PCs has necrotic resistance, and it tries to blast that PC with its breath weapon whenever the resistance shows up again.

Mesmerizing Glare: The dracolich uses this every round, usually against the first PC to make a melee attack against it. It might change this tactic if another likely melee attacker has other PCs nearby who could end up in the blast 3. In fact, the dracolich doesn't have to put the PC currently attacking it in the blast. If it can stun two or more other PCs, especially if they'll lose a turn by being stunned, then the dracolich could ignore the PC attacking it and glare at the better targets.

It's tempting to use *mesmerizing glare* against the same particularly dangerous PC every round. This removes a PC's output from the fight entirely—at very little cost to the dracolich. But doing this also removes an actual player from the action at your table, so your sense of drama might demand that you mix up the glares a bit.



Movement: The dracolich moves to negate the PCs' positional advantage and to set up nice killing zones for its *blackfire* or *breath weapon*. Early in the battle, it isn't as careful about avoiding opportunity attacks as it might otherwise be. It does fly from one position to another, so it only provokes for leaving the initial square.

Retreat/Pursuit: The dracolich can't leave this chamber, so neither retreat nor pursuit are possible. It's too haughty to bargain for its existence. If reduced below 100 hit points, it starts to focus its efforts on taking at least one PC to with it.

Portraying the Dracolich

The dracolich refers to itself as "Rukaleth, the Bound Guardian," and it makes clear that it is forced to serve the sebaceans. It doesn't apologize for attacking the PCs but instead suggests that the attack is nothing personal. It says, "Bound here as I am, I take no joy in your inevitable destruction, mortals . . ." or something similar. If the PCs slay the dracolich, it thanks them for granting the "final release" that it has craved for centuries.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Embedded in the western part of the north wall is a series of stone basins arranged in a diagonal line down the wall, each with a spout that hangs over the next lower basin. This is a basic water clock. The basins are filled with phosphorescent water that drips from basin to basin, providing bright light for 10 squares and dim light for another 10 squares beyond that.

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 40 feet high.

Eggs: These are mummified dragon eggs. They're difficult terrain.

Breaking an egg open, which any reasonable force can accomplish, reveals a dragon hatchling skeleton covered in wispy tissue. A successful DC 22 Nature check allows a PC to discern that the egg and hatchling were never really alive. A subsequent successful DC 22 Religion check suggests that the eggs and hatchlings were undead, perhaps the result of an effort to create creatures that were born as dracoliches.

Pyramid: The stairs on this 20-foot pyramid are difficult terrain. On the angled sides, the slope and bones conspire to make it a difficult climb (Athletics DC 25).

Shaft: It's a 300-foot drop to room 10 and a 60-foot climb from this room's ceiling (Athletics DC 25) up to room 1.

Water Clock: This is not only a water clock, but also the sebaceans' protection against the dracolich if it breaks its bonds. The water cycles through a magical reservoir behind the wall. It looks like normal water other than the glowing algae it contains. A successful DC 27 Arcana check is sufficient to tell the water flows magically and is itself magical.

"Bound here as I am, I take no joy in your inevitable destruction, mortals . . ."

A creature that drinks the water (minor action) is unaffected by the next stunned condition it suffers. This effect lasts until the affected creature would be stunned, at which time the effect negates that one stunned condition, or for 5 minutes—whichever is less.

Treasure: The dracolich's treasure, two parcels you assigned, is scattered among the eggs.

5. Pain Pyramid

Encounter Level 21 (20,000 XP)

Setup

3 painwrought helmed horrors (H)
1 pain pyramid trap (pyramid on map)

Because of the *pain pyramid*, exact positioning matters in this room more than usual (see Tactics below).

Modify the description of the room's statue as needed to fit your campaign.

When the PCs can see into the room, read:

You can't see the full extent of the room yet, but you can see a massive stone pyramid covered in glowing runes. The runes pain your eyes, warning against approach.

When the PCs reach a doorway, read:

Two suits of dark plate armor stand along the western edge of the room. Next to them is an obsidian statue of a heavily muscled human male, his arms reaching upward to the ceiling. Near a section of collapsed wall in the eastern part of the room is another similar suit. Red light illuminates each suit of plate armor from within, and dances along the edges of the greatsword each one wields.

Passages exit the room to the north and south.

Pain Pyramid

This stone pyramid in the room's center is 18 feet high. At its apex is a crystal that triggers whenever someone steps within 2 squares of the pyramid's base. The runes flash brightly and the room is plunged into darkness for an instant, then the runes start glowing again.

Pain Pyramid **Level 21 Warder**
Trap XP 3,200

This magical pyramid bears runes that warn against approach.

Trap: The pyramid in the center of the room attacks creatures that draw near with powerful psychic attacks that can damage and slow intruders.

Perception

✦ DC 22: The character notices the power flows into the runes from the pyramid's top.

Additional Skill: Arcana or Religion

✦ DC 27: The character recognizes the nature of the pain pyramid, including its attack and trigger.

Trigger

When a creature approaches within 2 squares of the pyramid's base, the trap attacks. Once a creature has entered the area, it can remain in the area without suffering further attacks. The trap attacks again when another creature enters the area, or if a creature leaves and reenters the area.

Attack

Opportunity Action **Close** burst 2
Attack: +24 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is slowed until the start of its next turn.
Aftereffect: Ongoing 10 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends both).

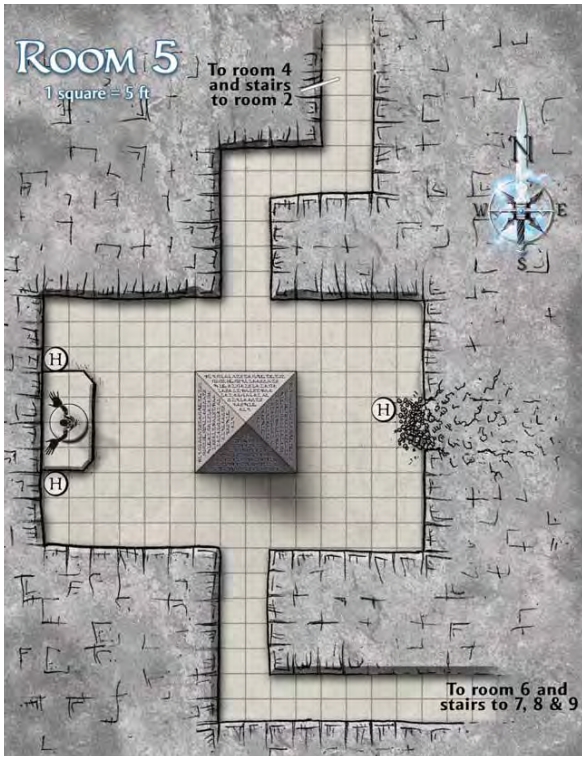
Countermeasures

✦ A character can climb the pyramid's side with a DC 27 Athletics check.
✦ A character adjacent to the apex can disable the trap with a DC 29 Thievery check or Arcana check.

Tactics

This fight is all about the helmed horrors using the pain pyramid to their advantage. They aren't immune to the trap, but with lots of hit points and regeneration, they're willing to trigger the pyramid whenever they can punish the PCs with it. The pyramid's attack is an opportunity action, so it can be triggered once per combatant.

Helmed horrors engage in melee combat when they can, flying to avoid opportunity attacks. Each



one uses its *blade sweep* whenever two targets are available. It saves its *painful elemental burst* for moments when it's immobilized and unable to hurt the PCs any other way. A helmed horror pushes the PCs out of the pain pyramid's area if it thinks they might be forced to reenter the area. The helmed horrors aren't immune to each other's *painful elemental burst*, but they are willing to engage in some friendly fire to nail the PCs.

The helmed horrors fight until slain. They don't pursue fleeing PCs beyond this room. Instead, they retreat to their starting positions without triggering the trap, and they regenerate and recharge until they're good as new.

Portraying the Helmed Horrors

The helmed horrors utter a single phrase in Primordial when they engage the PCs: "Make the intruders suffer." They also hiss when the pain pyramid immobilizes them. Other than that, they're hauntingly silent.

Fun Before Frustration

The helmed horrors can use the pyramid to make the PCs' lives miserable. But if the PCs have particularly bad luck, your players might become miserable, and that's no good. After you've doled out an appropriate dollop of frustration, you can have the helmed horrors all stay within the pyramid's area and stop triggering it on purpose. The battle is supposed to confound the players to a degree, but it shouldn't kill their enthusiasm for the game.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The glowing runes provide bright light throughout the chamber.

Ceiling: The ceiling to this chamber is 30 feet high.

Statue: This 22-foot figure (Athletics DC 20 to climb) is part of the ziggurat's original design, and the low platform it's on is no hindrance to movement. Its squares are difficult terrain, and it is blocking terrain for determining cover.

East Cave-In: There used to be a passageway heading upward from here, but it's blocked by tons of broken stone. The cave-in extends for at least 1,000 feet.

Treasure: One parcel is at the statue's feet.

Force Pods **Level 20 Blaster**
Hazard XP 2,800

The nearby pods suddenly expand and pulse with power, sending a forceful wave of green energy rolling over the area.

Hazard: When an enemy comes within 2 squares of a pod, all pods start to exude smoke and expand (see Trigger below). Pods can distinguish among enemies and allies. A single force pod hazard includes four Large pods placed near each other.

Perception
The pods are obvious, but the danger is not.

Arcana
✦ DC 25: The character recognizes the nature of the force pod, but not how to disable it.

Insight
✦ DC 28: The character feels and alien fear from the pods and understands the force pulses are a defensive reaction. This opens the possibility of the second countermeasure.

Trigger
When an enemy comes within 2 squares of a pod, the hazard reacts and rolls initiative. The pods continue to detonate each round until disabled or until no enemy is within 2 squares.

Attack
Initiative +8
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target Enemies in the burst
Attack +23 vs. Reflex
Hit 2d6 + 7 force damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares and knocked prone.

Countermeasures
✦ A character can attack a pod (AC 34, other defenses 32; 45 hp). Destroying a pod disables that part of the hazard.
✦ This is available only if a PC succeeds on the Insight check above. An adjacent character can disable a single force pod with a DC 30 Diplomacy or Insight check, made as a standard action to project calm feelings at the pod. The pod reactivates if it or any other pod is attacked.

3 Painwrought Helmed Horrors (H) **Level 20 Elite Soldier**
Medium elemental animate (construct) XP 5,600

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +22; darkvision, true sight 10
HP 380; **Bloodied** 190
Regeneration 10
AC 38; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 34
Immune disease, poison, sleep
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8, fly 8 (clumsy)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Elemental Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon; Cold, Fire, Lightning, or Thunder**
+26 vs. AC; 1d10 + 8 damage plus 1d10 cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage (painwrought helmed horror's choice).

Blade Sweep (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon; Cold, Fire, Lightning, or Thunder**
The painwrought helmed horror makes an *elemental greatsword* attack against two different targets within reach.

Painful Elemental Blast (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Psychic; Cold, Fire, Lightning, or Thunder**
Close blast 3; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 psychic and cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage (painwrought helmed horror's choice), and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Tactical Step (free, when the greater helmed horror hits with an opportunity attack; at-will)
The painwrought helmed horror shifts 3 squares.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Insight +22

Str 26 (+18)	**Dex** 23 (+16)	**Wis** 24 (+17)
Con 22 (+16)	**Int** 12 (+11)	**Cha** 18 (+14)

Equipment greatsword

6. Pods Arcane

Encounter Level 21 (17,500 XP)

Setup

1 larva mage (L)
1 astral stalker (see below)
1 force pods hazard (green pods on map)

A larva mage, seeking the same world-ending Far Realm invasion as the sebaceans, has placed its arcane knowledge at the sebaceans' disposal. Its astral stalker bodyguard starts invisible in whichever entry passage the PCs aren't using, so it isn't shown on the map.

Modify the description of the room's statue as you need to fit the story you're telling. The force pods might also become part of your current and future plots for the ziggurat and the sebaceans. Further, you can add details to the papers on the larva mage's desk.

When the PCs reach a doorway, read:

This room has four pods—like giant cocoons or eggs—made of a swirling, glowing green substance. They have an almost liquid sheen to them, and you see small wisps of smoke or mist emerge from their tops. A red marble statue on the south wall depicts a fat human woman with a hair braid that encircles her body, preserving her modesty. An alcove opens in the southeast.

See the skills required for identifying the hazard. If PCs come from the east, they have line of sight to the larva mage immediately. Otherwise, they see it only later.

Once the PCs can see the larva mage, read:

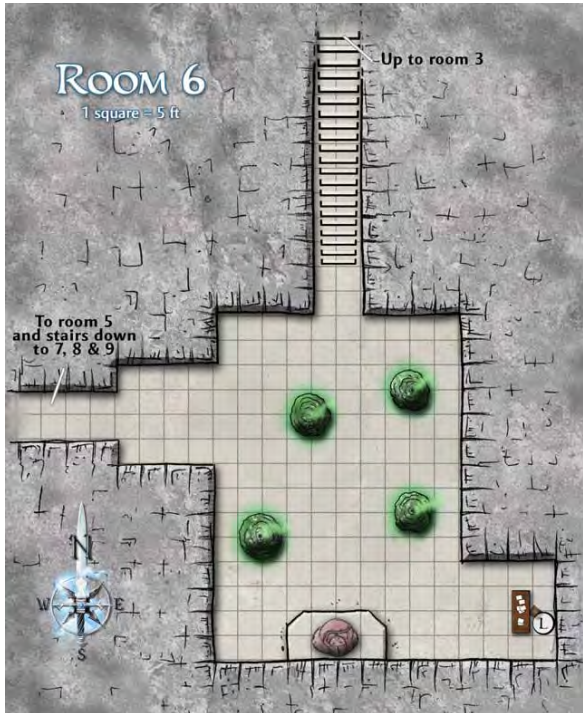
Standing behind a desk in the alcove is a darkly robed humanoid wearing an ivory facemask.

Force Pods

These pods are curiosities that the sebaceans brought from the Far Realm. Whether they have some greater purpose is up to you. If you're expanding the adventure, then the pods could be cocoons or eggs of some kind. The force they exude is just a defense technique to keep threats away while whatever's inside the pods grows. The pods see the larva mage, astral stalker, and all sebaceans as allies.

As soon as a PC steps within 2 squares of a pod, all four pods start blowing green smoke from their tops. Roll initiative for the pods. The pods continue to smoke until it's their turn, at which point all four detonate a kinetic wave that hits everyone within 2 squares of a pod. Resolve pod 1 first, then pods 2, 3, and 4. The order matters because one pod might push a PC toward or away from another pod that hasn't detonated. As long as someone's within 2 squares of one of the pods, detonate all four of them during the pods' turn.

The pods are blocking terrain for determining cover.



Features of the Area

Illumination: The pods provide bright light throughout the chamber.

Ceiling: The top limit in this chamber is 20 feet high.

Desk: This furnishing is 3 feet high, forming a low obstacle that can grant cover. The larva mage is doing arcane research on it. The research also includes some valuables—see Treasure, below.

Statue: This 15-foot figure (Athletics DC 20 to climb) is part of the ziggurat's original design, and the low platform it's on is no hindrance to movement. Its squares are difficult terrain, and it is blocking terrain for determining cover.

Treasure: One parcel is on the desk.

Portraying the Monsters

The astral stalker doesn't speak. While attacking, the larva mage tries to convince the PCs to surrender.

Larva Mage (L) **Level 21 Elite Artillery**
Medium natural magical beast (undead) XP 6,400
Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +12
HP 304; **Bloodied** 152
AC 35; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 27
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; takes half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant, 10 against close and area attacks.
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Corrupting Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+24 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 necrotic damage.

Horrific Visage (minor; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) ✦ **Fear**
Ranged 10; +24 vs. Will; the target is immobilized (save ends) and cannot attack the larva mage until the end of its next turn.

Ray of Cold Death (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Necrotic**
Ranged 20; +26 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 cold and necrotic damage, or 4d8 + 8 cold and necrotic damage if the target is bloodied.

Worm's Feast (standard; recharge ⁞⁞) ✦ **Illusion**
Ranged 5; the target is tricked into believing that worms are devouring its flesh; +26 vs. Will; 4d10 + 8 damage. If this damage doesn't reduce the target to 0 or fewer hit points, the target takes no damage but is stunned until the end of its next turn.

Withering Flame (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Necrotic**
Area burst 1 within 20; +24 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 8 fire and necrotic damage.

Squeezing Swarm
By altering its shape, a larva mage can squeeze through small openings as if it were a Tiny creature (see "Squeeze," *Player's Handbook* 292).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +23, History +23, Religion +23
Str 14 (+12) **Dex** 16 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 20 (+15) **Int** 26 (+18) **Cha** 15 (+12)

Astral Stalker **Level 22 Elite Lurker**
Medium immortal humanoid XP 8,300
Initiative +23 **Senses** Perception +18; blindsight 10
HP 314; **Bloodied** 157
AC 38; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 32
Saving Throws +2
Speed 10, climb 6
Action Points 1

Claw (standard; at-will)
+27 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 damage, and the astral stalker can choose to designate the target as its quarry (see *stalker's quarry*).

Throat Dart (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
Ranged 5/10; +29 vs. AC; 1d10 + 8 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target is stunned instead of immobilized (save ends).

Quick Claws (standard; at-will)
Against a slowed or an immobilized target, the astral stalker makes two claw attacks.

Combat Advantage
The astral stalker's melee attacks deal an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Invisibility (standard; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The astral stalker turns invisible until it attacks.

Stalker's Quarry (minor; at-will)
The astral stalker knows the exact location of a creature it has designated as its quarry. The astral stalker can have only one quarry at a time, but the power works across any distance and even crosses planar boundaries.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Skills Stealth +24
Str 22 (+17) **Dex** 26 (+19) **Wis** 15 (+13)
Con 19 (+15) **Int** 8 (+10) **Cha** 10 (+11)

Tactics

The larva mage stays behind its desk (see Features of the Area) for cover, and it flings spells at the PCs. It uses *horrific visage* every turn against the most dangerous looking PC. Whenever the PCs cluster in such a way that the larva mage can attack two or more of them with *withering flame*, it does so. It saves *ray of cold death* for long-range attacks, as well as for bloodied targets. Paying attention to the state of its foes, it employs *worm's feast* as a finishing move. If it thinks doing so might down an enemy, it uses its action point to shoot *ray of cold death* and *worm's feast* at the same target during the same turn. It uses *squeezing swarm* to retreat from melee—perhaps to the statue or among the pods for cover.

The astral stalker waits until the PCs move into the room, then it fires a *throat dart* after the PCs are among the pods. It then uses an action point to turn invisible again. Thereafter, the stalker uses its claws, unless it needs to use a *throat dart* to hit a PC. It designates a PC it hits as its quarry, so it can track the party later.

The monsters fight until slain. The larva mage is unwilling to leave this chamber. If the PCs retreat, it sends the astral stalker to hunt them down after a short rest. The astral stalker joins a subsequent battle, but it retreats if bloodied. It doesn't leave the ziggurat.

7. Waterfall Crypt

Encounter Level 21 (16,550 XP)

Setup

3 holy ziggurat guardians (H)
2 undead gibbering abominations (A)
1 holy ziggurat slinger (S)

As the PCs approach, they hear the roar of falling water several hundred feet before they arrive. The sebaceans keep these undead around in case they ever need a clue into the ziggurat's past.

As the PCs reach the water-filled fissure, read:

The floor of the hallway is cracked in the center, luminous water churning in it.

When the PCs reach the doorway, read:

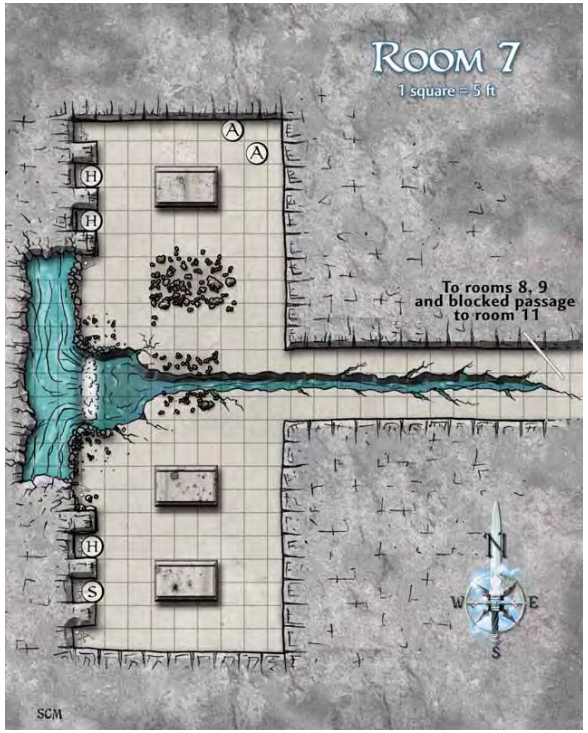
The west wall has a luminous waterfall running down it. Water pools at the base of the waterfall. The broken stones where the water flows suggest that the builders didn't plan for a waterfall here. It has cut a channel in the floor and into the hall. The channel divides the room into northern and southern portions.

An intact crypt squats north of the channel, and two similar structures are to the south. You can see the broken remnants of two other crypts near the middle of the room. One was directly in the water's path.

Holy Ziggurat Slinger (S) **Level 22 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 4,150
Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 165; **Bloodied** 82
AC 34; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 33
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 5 necrotic, 5 radiant
Speed 6, climb 6
⨺ **Slam** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant**
+26 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 radiant damage (save ends).
⨺ **Holy Sling** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +28 vs. AC; 2d6 + 9 radiant damage, and the target is weakened and takes a -2 penalty to saving throws (save ends both).
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Athletics +21
Str 20 (+16) **Dex** 24 (+18) **Wis** 20 (+16)
Con 27 (+19) **Int** 17 (+14) **Cha** 19 (+15)
Equipment sling

3 Holy Ziggurat Guardians (H) **Level 20 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 2,800 each
Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 193; **Bloodied** 96
AC 36; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 31
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 5 necrotic, 5 radiant
Speed 6, climb 6
⨺ **Holy Spear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
+27 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 radiant damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 radiant damage (save ends) and is marked until the end of the ziggurat guardian's next turn.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Athletics +21
Str 22 (+16) **Dex** 22 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+15)
Con 25 (+17) **Int** 17 (+13) **Cha** 17 (+13)
Equipment spear

Movement within several of the alcoves along the west wall attracts your attention. Humanoid corpses in loincloths stir there, eyes and weapons lighting with white radiance. Floating masses of gray flesh covered with eyes and toothy maws float in the northeast corner of the room. You can barely hear their murmuring above the sound of the flowing water.



Features of the Area

Illumination: The luminous water creates bright light in the room.

Burial Alcoves: Each of these alcoves is wide enough to provide a square of fighting space. The southernmost and northernmost alcoves also contain bones (difficult terrain). Alcove walls act as blocking terrain for determining cover. The southernmost alcove also contains a steel spearhead.

Channel: The water channel drops 3 feet to the water, which is 2 feet deep (except at the waterfall, see below). It takes a move action to cross the channel by stepping down and up the other side. Or a creature can just jump (Athletics DC 10, 5 with a running start). The water is harmless, despite its glow.

Crypts: These small buildings are 10 feet high. Each is decorated with carvings, meaningful only if you want them to be. The stone door on each crypt is heavy and mortared shut. It takes 50 damage or a DC 22 Athletics check to break the stone door open. The northern crypt holds a human skeleton and some treasure (see below). The other two crypts hold only multiple skeletons.

Waterfall: Too gentle to pose a real danger, this 15-foot cascade churns up the pool at its base. That pool is 10 feet deep. Worn smooth by the water, the wall behind the waterfall can be climbed (Athletics DC 30) to the terrace where the water flows.

The waterfall pours in from a small breach to a dominion in the Astral Sea. Water flows down the middle of the hallway and seeps through fissures in the stone blocks. It eventually percolates down into room 10.

Treasure: The northern crypt contains one parcel.

Portraying the Monsters

If you desire, the humanoid undead here can be reasoned with as part of your designs on the ziggurat's purpose. The PCs can't do so until they destroy the mad gibbering abominations. Until they do, they have to fight.

The abominations utter nonsense every turn when using their *gibbering*. Some of the gibbering refers to aspects of the ziggurat, and you can add to it in any way you'd like, making it meaningful or otherwise. The gibbering might include any of the following:

- ✦ *"Fire! And flame! Fear the black, black, black where-am-I of history-mystery. Yes!"*
- ✦ *"You will-have-been being here before now! The muscles, they strain against the stars . . . the broken! Broken! Stars!"*
- ✦ *"Water underneath, under the thunder. Hear it? Yes! Outstanding! The black, black, black argument unfolds."*
- ✦ *"The hallways echo like veins, like wormy, burning, squirming veins. The man below the ceiling, stealing, searing, biting!"*
- ✦ *"Do you never deny that you didn't? You didn't! You never could have! Except before! Before they came."*
- ✦ *"Seek sand, seek sand . . . and sand sanctimonious sanity, and stand—stand-stand. We are all sand!"*
- ✦ *"The eggs don't hatch. They're patient, ancient patience. Hasten their ancient, raise their hazy memory."*
- ✦ *"Go down, brown sound, down, down underground. Howling sounds underground never found last hound."*

Tactics

The guardians move out of the alcoves right away and engage the PCs in melee. Delaying if necessary, the slinger and abominations let the guardians move into position first. The guardians mark as many different PCs as they can. They jump and use their climbing ability to maneuver around the PCs as they need to.

On its turn, the slinger moves near the waterfall. The next turn, it climbs the waterfall to stand on the terrace above. It makes a ranged attack each round.

Each undead gibbering abomination launches an *eye of despair*, then it swoops toward the PCs, relying on the guardians' marks and its *gibbering* to keep the PCs at bay. A gibbering abomination maneuvers to keep combat advantage and uses its tentacles (with bonus damage) against dazed enemies until its *eye of despair* recharges. At that point it floats backward far enough to use that power, returning to the fray the following turn

The creatures all fight until slain (unless you plan to have the undead talk to the PCs—see Portraying the Monsters). They don't pursue the PCs beyond this room

2 Undead Gibbering Abominations (A)		**Level 18 Controller**
Medium aberrant magical beast (undead)		XP 2,000 each
Initiative +13	**Senses** Perception +13; all-around vision, darkvision	
HP 168; **Bloodied** 84		
AC 32; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30		
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 5 necrotic, 5 radiant		
Speed 6, fly 4 (hover; maximum altitude 1)		
⊕ **Tentacles** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Psychic**		
Reach 2; +22 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic and psychic damage (save ends).		
Gibbering (free, once on the undead gibbering abomination's turn before it takes other actions; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**		
Close burst 5; deafened creatures are immune; +20 vs. Will; the target is dazed until the end of the undead gibbering abomination's next turn.		
Eye of Despair (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Psychic**		
Ranged 10; +20 vs. Will; 3d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).		
Combat Advantage		
The undead gibbering abomination deals an extra 2d6 psychic damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.		
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –	
Str 20 (+14)	**Dex** 18 (+13)	**Wis** 19 (+13)
Con 16 (+12)	**Int** 11 (+9)	**Cha** 12 (+10)

8. Void Crypt

Encounter Level 21 (16,000 XP)

Setup

3 ancient ziggurat mummies (see below)
1 ziggurat ghost (G)
1 view beyond hazard (see below)

This unlit chamber holds more of the undead remnants of the society that built the ziggurat. Sebaceans don't come down here.

Don't indicate the monsters until the PCs can actually see them. The ghost is out of line of sight when the PCs enter, and the mummies rest within the numbered crypts. On the map, a dotted red line indicates the hazard.

Unless the PCs advance with Stealth and without light, the undead know intruders approach. PCs that have light notice it dims here (see Features of the Area).

This room also contains a mosaic you might customize.

When the PCs reach the doorway, read:

This chamber swirls with dark dust that seems to move on an unfelt breeze. It has a number of burial alcoves on the south wall and five large crypts in the middle. A mosaic covers the west, north, and east walls. It depicts a heavily muscled black-skinned man and a two-headed tiger walking along a mountain path—of sorts. About half of the "mountains" look more like pyramids than natural formations.

Perception DC 22: *You notice the dust just ahead isn't reflecting light. In fact, it seems to be absorbing it.*

Perception DC 27: *Something moves in or near the burial alcoves.*

If the PCs see the light-eating dust, a successful Arcana check can warn them what the dust really means. See the hazards statistics.

As soon as it hears the PCs, the ziggurat ghost moves to attack. It might surprise those who don't hear it (Perception DC 34 above). The ancient ziggurat mummies roll initiative at the same time.

View Beyond **Level 21 Warder**
Hazard XP 3,200

The area swirls with dark dust.

Hazard Supernatural powers cause a temporary unweaving of the strands of time, revealing a space beyond known existence, perhaps where the dead go. The dust typically covers 10 contiguous squares in a room.

Perception

✦ DC 22: The character notices that the swirling dust appears to absorb light, darkening the area.

Additional Skill: Arcana

✦ DC 27: The character identifies the glow that often presages this hazard.

Trigger

When a creature casts a spell or supernatural power in the hazard's area, or the hazard's area is within the area of a spell or other supernatural power, the hazard attacks. What qualifies as a supernatural power is left to DM discretion.

Attack

Opportunity Action **Close** burst 3
Targets: All creatures in burst
Attack: +25 vs. Will
Hit: 3d6 + 8 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is not dazed.
Special: Immortals, animates, and undead are immune.

Features of the Area

Illumination: This room is dark. This room has a connection to the Shadowfell, so light areas are halved within it. (Arcana or Religion DC 28 to sense the connection and to discern the meaning of the light-dimming effect.) The center of the Shadowfell connection is the view beyond hazard.

Burial Alcoves: Each of these alcoves is wide enough to provide a square of fighting space. Those shown to contain bones are difficult terrain. Alcove walls act as blocking terrain for determining cover.

Crypts: These small buildings are 10 feet high. Each is decorated with carvings, meaningful only if you want them to be. Those marked 1, 2, and 3 have mummies in them. The other two crypts hold only multiple skeletons, although the eastern one has a mummy (not undead).

The stone door on each unnumbered crypt is heavy and mortared shut. It takes 50 damage or a DC 22 Athletics check to break the stone door open.

Mosaic: This wall decoration is made of colorful stones. It has mythological significance to the ziggurat's builders, and perhaps to your campaign.

Treasure: The eastern crypt contains one parcel.

Mummy Rot DCs

Rather than those on MM 192, the DCs for the ancient ziggurat mummies' mummy rot are: Endurance improve DC 29, maintain DC 24, worsen DC 23 or lower. You don't really need to worry about the mummy rot until the PCs take an extended rest.

Ziggurat Ghost (G)	Level 21 Controller
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 3,200

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
HP 152; **Bloodied** 76
AC 32; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 32
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing

Blinding Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+24 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 necrotic damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).

Ghostly Possession (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Charm**
Target must be a living humanoid; +24 vs. Will; the ghost enters the target's space and is removed from play, and the target is dominated (save ends). The ghost can use this power against only one creature at a time. When the target is no longer dominated, or when the ghost chooses to end its *ghostly possession* (a free action), the ghost reappears in a square adjacent to the target.

Terrifying Shriek (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +24 vs. Will; 3d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares and knocked prone.

Ghostly Terrain (standard; sustain minor; at-will) ✦ **Zone**
Area burst 2 within 10; the area is filled with ghostly lights, wisps of mist, and the faint whispers of the dead. The zone is difficult terrain and lightly obscured. Any creature that enters or ends its turn in the zone is subject to an attack: + 25 vs. Will; the target is immobilized (save ends).

Death Shriek (when reduced to 0 hp) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
The ziggurat ghost recharges and uses its *terrifying shriek* immediately.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +24

Str 11 (+10)	**Dex** 28 (+19)	**Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 20 (+15)	**Int** 12 (+11)	**Cha** 25 (+17)

Portraying the Monsters

As with room 7, the humanoid undead here could be part of your plans for further adventures. The PCs might talk to these creatures.

3 Ancient Ziggurat Mummies	Level 21 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 3,200 each

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
Tomb Rot (**Necrotic**) aura 1; enemies that start their turn in the aura take 10 necrotic damage.
HP 246; **Bloodied** 123; see also *dust of death*
Regeneration 10 (if the mummy takes radiant damage, regeneration doesn't function on its next turn)
AC 32; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 32; see also *despair* above
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 fire
Speed 6

Rotting Slam (standard; at-will) ✦ **Disease, Necrotic**
+24 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target contracts level 21 mummy rot (see *MM* 192 and below).

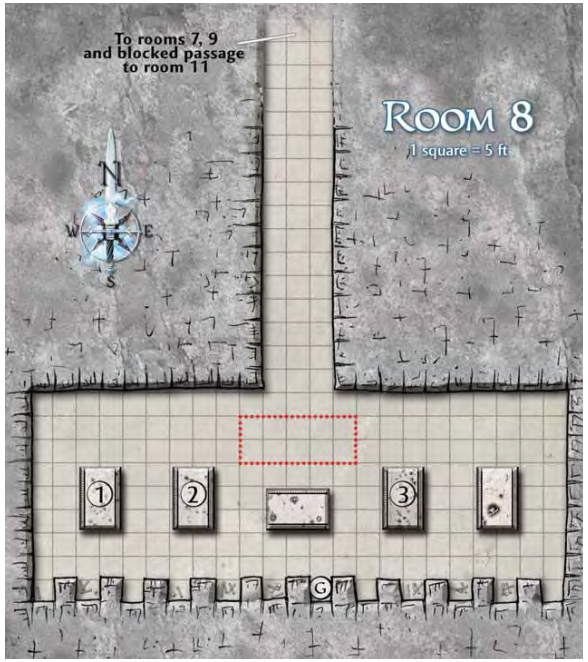
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Str 22 (+16)	**Dex** 16 (+13)	**Wis** 10 (+10)
Con 26 (+18)	**Int** 4 (+7)	**Cha** 20 (+15)

The mummies are silent, implacable foes. In its spirit form, the ghost doesn't actually speak. It screeches when wounded and cackles whenever one of its attacks hits. But when the ghost possesses a PC, it uses the PC's voice to taunt and insult the other characters.

Tactics

The ghost moves forward and uses *ghostly terrain* right on top of the view beyond hazard. This sets the hazard off. It also means the PCs can't see the exact extent of the hazard. Don't correct the players if they think the effect is part of the ghost's attack. The ghost then uses its *terrifying shriek* to push PCs into the hazard/zone area—and it does this again when the power recharges. Afterward, it tries to possess someone, using its minor action to maintain the zone. It uses its phasing ability to maneuver away from the PCs as it needs to, walking right through the crypt or alcove walls.



Each ancient ziggurat mummy uses a move action and a minor action to open its crypt. The mummy then charges into battle if possible. All the mummies simply slam away at the PCs, moving only to block direct attacks on the ghost.

The monsters fight until slain. If the PCs retreat, then the mummies shamble back into their crypts after a few minutes, and the tormenting ghost likewise returns to a burial alcove.

9. Betrayer Crypt

Encounter Level 21 (17,900 XP)

Setup

1 betrayer spirit reaver (R)
3 betrayer wights (W)
1 voidsoul specter (see below)

This burial chamber also has undead from the ziggurat's past. However, these undead aren't like the others. They're evil guardians bound here against their will for crimes they committed in life. All of the monsters are out of line of sight when the PCs enter, so don't show them until they're seen. The voidsoul specter is inside the center crypt, so it can't be seen at all.

Like room 9, the PCs must approach quietly and without light to avoid alerting the undead.

This room also contains mosaics you might customize.

When the PCs reach the doorway, read:

This cool burial chamber is heavy with gloom. It has alcoves in the northern wall and five stone crypts in the center. Mosaics stretch across the west, south, and east walls. The western mosaic depicts white apes pulling at a muscular black-skinned human male, separating him from a fat crimson-skinned human woman who is also beset by apes. The southern mosaic shows the male riding a two-headed tiger, shooting a bow at a throng of apes. And the eastern mosaic shows the fat woman kneeling before an immense black dragon.

Perception DC 26: *You hear movement from several of the burial alcoves in the north.*

If the PCs don't hear the monsters, the undead receive a surprise round. They attack immediately.

Features of the Area

Illumination: This room is dark.

Burial Alcoves: Each of these alcoves is wide enough to provide a square of fighting space. Those shown to contain bones are difficult terrain. Alcove walls act as blocking terrain for determining cover.

Crypts: These small buildings are 10 feet high. Each is decorated with carvings, meaningful only if you want them to be. All the crypts hold multiple skeletons, but the eastern and western one also hold a few mummies (not undead) and some treasure (see below). All the doors on the crypts are heavy and mortared shut. It takes 50 damage or a DC 22 Athletics check to break the stone door open.

Mosaic: This colorful wall art has no meaning other than what you give it.

Treasure: The easternmost crypt has one parcel, and the westernmost crypt has another.

Portraying the Monsters

The reaver and wights are extremely pale, humanlike creatures with bestial features, reminiscent of the apes in the mosaic. They threaten and mock the PCs. They also hint at their fate as eternal guardians (soulless in the case of the wights). When slain, they're thankful for the release from their condition.

The voidsoul specter speaks in a chilling whisper right before attacking. It taunts individual PCs. However, it's careful not to speak when doing so could help the PCs locate it. It fears destruction.

Betrayer Spirit Reaver (R) **Level 21 Soldier**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 3,200
Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
HP 202; **Bloodied** 101
AC 37; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 33
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 20 necrotic;
Vulnerable 10 radiant
Speed 5

⨺ **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
+26 vs. AC; 2d12 + 7 damage (crit 3d12 + 31), and the target is dazed (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target is dazed and weakened (save ends both).

⤖ **Murderous Gaze** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Gaze, Necrotic**
Ranged 10; must target a living creature; +20 vs. Fortitude; if the target is weakened, it is reduced to 0 hit points. Otherwise, the target takes 3d6 + 7 necrotic damage and loses a healing surge.

Death Drinker
If a living creature is reduced to 0 hit points within 5 squares of the betrayer spirit reaver, the reaver gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn, as well as 15 temporary hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Str 24 (+17) **Dex** 24 (+17) **Wis** 6 (+8)
Con 26 (+18) **Int** 10 (+10) **Cha** 24 (+17)
Equipment greataxe

Tactics

The betrayer spirit reaver rushes in to combat, charging if it must. Hoping to benefit greatly from *death drinker* as its foes fall, it moves among the PCs and stays there, hacking with its greataxe. It uses its *murderous gaze* as soon as it knows a PC is weakened, even if doing so draws an opportunity attack or other damage. Of course, it moves or shifts to avoid such damage if it can.

3 Betrayer Wights (W)	Level 21 Brute
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 3,200 each

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
HP 244; **Bloodied** 122; see also *death wail*
AC 33; **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 32
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 20 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Speed 7

Claw (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
+24 vs. AC; 2d8 + 9 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened. To end the weakened condition, the target must spend a healing surge (a free action). If the target does so, the wight regains 15 hit points.

Death Wail (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +21 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 necrotic damage. Undead allies in the burst can make a basic attack as a free action.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Str 28 (+19)	**Dex** 22 (+16)	**Wis** 6 (+8)
Con 24 (+17)	**Int** 8 (+9)	**Cha** 20 (+15)

Like the reaver, the wights rush the PCs, cunningly maneuvering for flanking. They too simply stay among the PCs, cutting with their claws. Until they're bloodied, they willingly draw opportunity attacks and other damage to get at softer targets in the party's ranks. Remember that the option to remove the weakened condition the wights impose is a free action, so a PC can do it at any time.

Voidsoul Specter	Level 23 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 5,100

Initiative +23 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
Spectral Cold (**Cold**) aura 1; an enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 10 cold damage and takes a –2 penalty to all defenses until the start of its next turn.
HP 115; **Bloodied** 57
AC 35; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 34
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 30 necrotic, insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing

Spectral Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+25 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 6 necrotic damage.

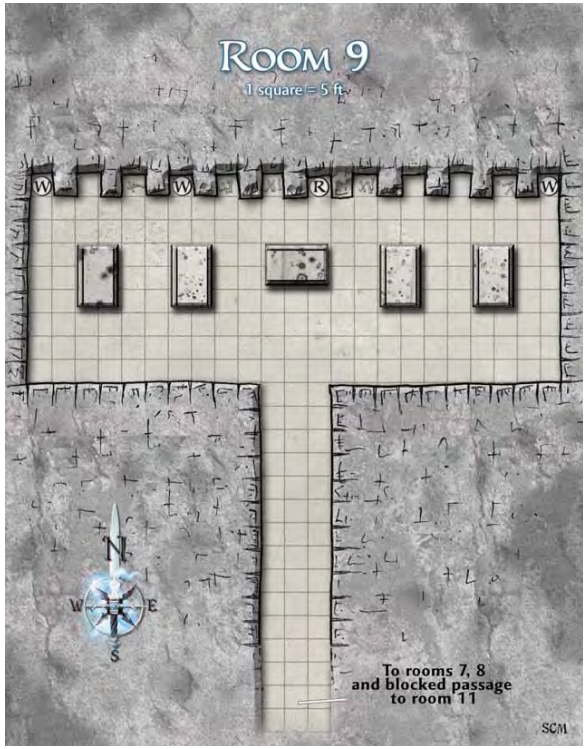
Life Siphon (standard; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
Close blast 5; +25 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 6 necrotic damage, and the voidsoul specter regains 5 hit points for every creature damaged by the attack.

Invisibility (minor 1/round; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The voidsoul specter becomes invisible until it attacks or until it is hit by an attack. It remains invisible while using *life siphon*.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +24

Str 12 (+12)	**Dex** 26 (+19)	**Wis** 10 (+11)
Con 19 (+15)	**Int** 11 (+11)	**Cha** 23 (+17)

When its initiative count comes up, the voidsoul specter turns invisible and emerges from the center crypt. It moves among the PCs as well, trying to get as many as possible in its aura. PCs instantly know something is amiss, because the temperature drops—those in the aura feel its icy grip. The specter is content to remain invisible for a turn before attacking, and it only attacks from a good position away from the dangerous melee combatants. It turns invisible each turn before attacking to ensure combat advantage and to choose its angle of attack without risking opportunity attacks. Once it's bloodied, it moves to a good spot for its life siphon, which doesn't render it visible. It doesn't care if it hits its allies with life siphon, knowing that if it manages to damage them, it regains even more hit points.



The reaver and wights fight until slain, but the specter retreats into the center crypt once it's at 29 or fewer hit points. It fights to the death if the PCs breach the crypt. Otherwise, it uses its 3 healing surges (each restoring 28 hp) and recharges *life siphon* after a short rest. If the PCs are still around, it attacks them, retreating again when bloodied. All of the monsters are bound to this chamber and the nearby hall, so they don't give chase.

10. Undercavern

Encounter Level 21 (18,100 XP)

Setup

1 sebacean mutant chuul (C)
1 sebacean mutant treant (T)
1 sebacean glider (Gl)
5 sebacean mutant apes (A)

This cavern is a hollow gap in the bedrock on which the ziggurat rests, and water from the Elemental Chaos has seeped here over the centuries from room 8. It's also home to a treant and a chuul that the sebaceans have bred as guardians.

PCs can initially arrive here only through the shaft to rooms 4 and 1. That shaft ends 20 feet above the water.

The chuul starts submerged in the deep water in the southwest corner. Don't reveal it until its turn.

When the PCs descend into the cavern, read:

Below is an immense cavern, the floor of which is covered with luminous water—you're not sure how deep. Three islands rise above it. The northern island has twisted, dark, vinelike masses along its northern and western reaches. Upon that island, several of the strange ape creatures caper and howl before a black altar, on which stands a black, winged insectile creature. Vine masses cover the southern island, which has a humanoid like a massive banyan tree covered in dark chitin and with glowing multifaceted eyes. A smaller eastern island is bare stone.

Sebacean Glider (Gl) **Level 20 Skirmisher**
Large aberrant magical beast XP 2,800

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 191; **Bloodied** 95
AC 34; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 31
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, fly 10; see also *reactive teleport*

⊕ **Limb Blades** (standard; at-will)
+25 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage.

⸸ **Flyby Attack** (standard; at-will)
The sebacean glider flies up to 10 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The glider doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

⸸ **Reactive Teleport** (immediate reaction, when the glider takes damage; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
The glider teleports 2 squares and attacks an adjacent creature; +25 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage.

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Stealth +23
Str 19 (+14) **Dex** 26 (+18) **Wis** 21 (+15)
Con 23 (+16) **Int** 12 (+11) **Cha** 14 (+12)

Features of the Area

Illumination: The water provides bright light in the whole cavern.

Ceiling: The moist, rough ceiling (Athletics DC 35 to climb) is 20 feet high.

Altar: This low obstacle is 3 feet high.

Deep Water: The water here varies between 5 and 15 feet deep (Athletics DC 10 to swim), darkening color indicating more depth. PCs fighting while underwater take penalties for aquatic combat: –2 to attack rolls for powers that have the fire keyword, and –2 to attack rolls with weapons other than spears or crossbows.

Sebacean Mutant Treant (T) **Level 21 Elite Soldier**
Huge aberrant magical beast (plant, undead) XP 6,400

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +14; low-light vision
Screaming Tree (**Psychic**) aura 2; an enemy in the aura at the start of its turn takes 10 psychic damage.
HP 400; **Bloodied** 200
AC 38; **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 34
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6 (forestwalk)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Reach 3; +25 vs. AC; 2d6 + 9 damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).

⸸ **Psychic Roots** (minor; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
Reach 4; +23 vs. Will; the target is knocked prone and immobilized (save ends).

Psychic Shock
A creature hit by the treant's opportunity attack is immobilized until the end of the treant's next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 28 (+19) **Dex** 18 (+14) **Wis** 9 (+9)
Con 24 (+17) **Int** 10 (+10) **Cha** 23 (+16)

Shallow Water: Where marked, the water is only about two feet deep. It is difficult terrain but poses no other difficulties.

Shaft to Room 11: It's a 40-foot climb to room 11 through this shaft, with DCs as the shaft above.

Shaft to Room 4: It's a 300-foot climb (Athletics DC 25) to room 4 and another 100-foot climb to room 1. PCs can climb up the slippery walls of the cave (DC 25), then a along the ceiling (see above).

Vine Masses: These sinewy black plants loop and snake along the ground where the islands show dark spots. They are difficult terrain. If attacked, they twist away from the danger, leaving the square clear.

Treasure: One parcel is on or around the altar.

Portraying the Monsters

The apes gibber and howl as always, but they also whine and whimper whenever the chuul or treant comes near. These monsters frighten the apes. The chuul makes no sound, but the snap of its claws echoes throughout the cavern whenever it makes an attack. The treant speaks Deep Speech, but it says little other than "Death!" whenever it attacks, and "Drown!" or "Stay!" when it immobilizes someone with its roots.

Sebacean Mutant Chuul (C) **Level 21 Elite Soldier**
Huge aberrant magical beast (aquatic) XP 6,400

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
Psychic Moan (Psychic) aura 2; the chuul exudes a constant hum of psychic energy. Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to Will defense and gain vulnerable 5 psychic.
HP 402; **Bloodied** 201
AC 39; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 34
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7, swim 7
Action Points 1

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +28 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage, or 4d8 + 8 damage against an immobilized creature.

Double Attack (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
The chuul makes two claw attacks. If both claw attacks hit a single target, the chuul makes a secondary attack against the same target with its tentacles. *Secondary Attack:* +26 vs. Fortitude; the target is immobilized (save ends).

Psychic Lure (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Will; 2d10 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is pulled 5 squares.

Tentacle Net ✦ **Poison**
A creature hit by the chuul's opportunity attack is immobilized until the end of the chuul's next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 27 (+18) **Dex** 19 (+14) **Wis** 15 (+12)
Con 25 (+17) **Int** 6 (+8) **Cha** 22 (+16)

5 Sebacean Mutant Apes (A) **Level 18 Minion**
Medium aberrant beast XP 500 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30
Speed 8, climb 8

Limb Blades (standard; at-will)
+23 vs. AC; 9 damage.

Dying Howl (when reduced to 0 hit points)
Each other sebacean mutant ape within 10 squares gains +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn. This bonus stacks with that from other sebacean mutant apes' *dying howls*.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 25 (+16) **Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 21 (+14)
Con 23 (+15) **Int** 5 (+6) **Cha** 15 (+12)

Tactics

On its turn after the PCs enter, the sebacean glider takes flight. It favors using *flyby attack* against those embattled by the chuul and treant.

As soon as it's aware of the PCs, the treant lurches toward them. Its *forestwalk* ability allows it to ignore the vine masses on the islands. It plants itself among the PCs, catching as many as possible in its aura and *psychic roots*. It then slams away at those within its reach, moving only to catch more enemies with its powers.

The chuul surfaces on its turn, when it moves up to a PC and makes its *double attack*. It prefers immobilized targets. Because the chuul gains +2 to attack rolls against non-aquatic PCs in deep water, it also likes to catch its targets there. When it can, it makes a *double attack*, only using *psychic lure* to pull a foe within reach when it needs to do so to avoid missing out on an attack during its turn. It might use an action point on its first turn to swim, *psychic lure* a PCs to it, then *double attack*.

Like good soldiers, the chuul and treant work well in close proximity to each other. Both can immobilize, which really benefits the chuul. The chuul's *psychic moan* makes the treant's *screaming tree* aura more potent, and makes *psychic roots* more likely to hit and immobilize.

As for the apes, they rush the PCs as soon as they can, splitting up and approaching from different directions.

If the PCs flee up either shaft, the treant lifts two mutant apes per round up to the shaft. With a climb speed of 8, the apes can make a credible pursuit. The sebacean glider flies up the shaft to room 11 if reduced to 30 or fewer hit points. If it can, it uses its three surges in that room during a short rest and warns the monsters there. All the other creatures fight until slain.

11. Hourglass Chamber

Encounter Level 22 (20,900 XP)

Setup

1 sebacean gleaner (Gl)
2 sebacean mutant nightwalkers (N)
6 sebacean mutant apes (A)

Tons of rock block the passage to this chamber on the same level as rooms 7,8, and 9. The PCs might figure a way through that cave-in, but they're most likely to come through the shaft from room 10.

The map shows four sebacean mutant apes, but that's because at the start of the encounter, the apes are piled atop one another. They all start in the indicated space, within a crystal cylinder (see Features of the Area).

This room has mosaics you can customize.

When the PCs see the room, read:

This nearly octagonal room has two large alcoves. Upon a dais on the east wall, a luminous white sebacean stands—right below a floating, bejeweled hourglass. Three glowing crystal columns filled with green mist also stand in the room. Two have giant obsidian-skinned, chitin-covered humanoids with horned heads, featureless except for glowing green eyes. The third has a throng of those weird ape-creatures, all leaping and climbing atop each other, scrabbling at the inside of the crystal tube.

The northern alcove has a mosaic of the fat woman depicted on mosaics elsewhere in the ziggurat. She's embracing a slim woman with serpentine arms ending in snakeheads. Bowing apes surround them on all sides. A small shelf is built into the northern wall.

In the southern alcove is a mosaic of the slim woman from the north alcove. Her arms are stretched out, and each is biting a stricken human in peasant garb. A small shelf is also built into the southern wall.

A short stair leads up to a western passage out of the room.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The crystal columns glow, providing bright light throughout the room. Their shards also glow for about 5 minutes, so the light remains for a while when the columns are gone.

Crystal Cylinders: A cylinder's wall doesn't block line of sight, but it does block line of effect. Creatures inside a cylinder have total cover from attacks that come from outside the cylinder. It takes 15 damage to break each cylinder. When it breaks, it leaves shattered glass in the marked squares that start adjacent to it. Those squares are difficult terrain, which a creature can ignore by taking 3 damage per square. A creature knocked prone on the shattered glass takes 1d10 damage.

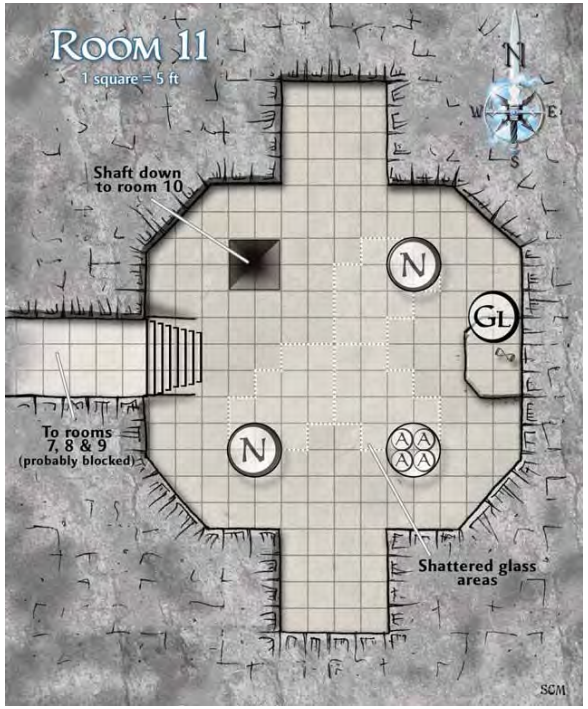
Deluvian Hourglass: This artifact floats about 10 feet off the ground, but anyone can grab it. It's fully described at the end of the adventure. If grabbed during the fight, a PC gets an instinctive sense that it functions like a +5 *implement* of whatever type that PC usually uses. The hourglass communicates with its new owner after the fight, when it describes its powers and preferences more fully.

Shaft: It's a 40-foot climb (Athletics DC 25) down to the ceiling of room 10 and another 20 feet down to the water in the Undercavern.

Treasure: One parcel is on the northern shelf, and another on the southern shelf.

Portraying the Monsters

The apes and the sebacean gleaner should seem more desperate than elsewhere—this is the last line of defense for the hourglass. Once it's bloodied, the gleaner starts trying to convince the PCs to leave the ziggurat.



It makes statements like:

- *"You must depart! The hourglass must hasten the end of the world! Surely you see this."*
- *"You cannot trifle with the power . . . of time itself! Flee while you still can!"*
- *"We've waited too long, keeping the hourglass safe! It must remain here until the end of the world!"*
- *"Your puny minds cannot fathom the untold wonders when the Mad Architects remake this world! Go now, and live out your ignorant mortal lives!"*
- *"Why do you wish to be trapped within the ziggurat until the end of the world?"*
- *"Your petty victories shall be short lived when the Mad Architects bring the glory of the Far Realm to your world!"*

Sebacean Gleaner (Gl)	Level 23 Controller
Large aberrant magical beast	XP 5,100
Initiative +15	**Senses** Perception +18; darkvision
HP 215; **Bloodied** 107	
AC 37; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 36	
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)	
Speed 6, climb 4	
Limb Blades (standard; at-will)	
+28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage.	
Toxic Spittle (standard; at-will)	
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Reflex, 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
Cocoon Prison (standard; recharges when no enemy is restrained by this power)	
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 acid damage, and the target is restrained (save ends).	
Hypnotic Toxin (standard; recharge ⚅)	
Reach 2; +27 vs. Will; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target is dominated (save ends).	
Adaptive Resistance	
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +23, History +23	
Str 19 (+15)	**Dex** 19 (+15) **Wis** 24 (+18)
Con 23 (+17)	**Int** 25 (+18) **Cha** 27 (+19)

6 Sebacean Mutant Apes (A)	Level 18 Minion
Medium aberrant beast	XP 500 each
Initiative +14	**Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	
AC 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30	
Speed 8, climb 8	
Limb Blades (standard; at-will)	
+23 vs. AC; 9 damage.	
Dying Howl (when reduced to 0 hit points)	
Each other sebacean mutant ape within 10 squares gains +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn. This bonus stacks with that from other sebacean mutant apes' *dying howls*.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Deep Speech
Str 25 (+16)	**Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 21 (+14)
Con 23 (+15)	**Int** 5 (+6) **Cha** 15 (+12)

Tactics

The sebacean gleaner can take a standard action on its first turn to shatter the crystal cylinders by force of will alone. If it's unable to do so, the creatures in the cylinders must batter their way free by attacking the cylinders from the inside.

Once it can attack the PCs, the gleaner uses normal gleaner tactics of hanging on the edge of the battle, alternating between *cocoon prison* and *toxic spittle* as recharge dictates. It uses *hypnotic toxin* on a melee attacker or to further hinder a foe that just escaped from a cocoon.

The nightwalkers move to opposite sides of the room, and they use *void lure* to pull the PCs back and forth between them. Each wants a PC close enough each turn to use its claws. It moves or charges to bring its claws to bear if it needs to. Until they're bloodied, the nightwalkers worry little about opportunity attacks. They do respect marks, however, because their accuracy is affected. If a nightwalker senses a bloodied enemy, it uses *mind annihilation* even if doing so provokes opportunity attacks. The nightwalkers focus on those they perceive to be the greatest threat, often defenders who control the battle's flow with marks.

Mutant apes simply block access to the gleaner, and slice the PCs with their *limb blades*.

If the PCs retreat, the apes follow them. The sebacean and the nightwalkers remain here. All the monsters know the stakes. They fight until slain.

2 Sebacean Mutant Nightwalkers (N)	Level 21 Elite Brute
Large aberrant humanoid (undead)	XP 6,400 each
Initiative +16	**Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
Void Static (**Psychic, Necrotic**) aura 5; enemies that start their turns in the aura take 5 psychic and necrotic damage.	
HP 490; **Bloodied** 245	
AC 35; **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 35	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 20 psychic, 20 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 20 radiant	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 8	
Action Points 1	
Claws (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic, Necrotic**	
Reach 2; +24 vs. AC; 1d8 + 9 damage plus 2d8 psychic and necrotic damage.	
Mind Annihilation (standard; encounter) ✦ **Gaze, Necrotic, Psychic**	
Ranged 5; affects a bloodied target only; +22 vs. Will; the target drops to 0 hit points. *Miss:* The target is dazed until the end of the sebacean mutant nightwalker's next turn. Resistance does not apply to this power.	
Void Lure (minor 1/round; at-will) ✦ **Gaze, Necrotic, Psychic**	
Close blast 5; targets enemies; +21 vs. Will; 1d8 + 7 necrotic and psychic damage, and the target is pulled 3 squares.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Str 28 (+19)	**Dex** 23 (+16) **Wis** 9 (+9)
Con 25 (+17)	**Int** 17 (+13) **Cha** 24 (+17)

Unfinished Business

With the sebaceans defeated and the *Deluvian Hourglass* in the PCs' hands, the adventure in *The Ziggurat Beyond Time* are over. The PCs' involvement in the end of the world might be just getting started.

As soon as it's handled for more than a few moments, the *Deluvian Hourglass* speaks in a whispery voice to its possessor, telling what it can do and what it expects in return. Tell the player what actions and events affect the concordance score positively or negatively, but don't say how many concordance points each is worth. Reveal some or all of the hourglass's motivations, depending on the likely arc of your campaign.

While the sebaceans held the hourglass for centuries, they aren't the only ones who know of or desire its power. An artifact such as the *Deluvian Hourglass* attracts attention from all sorts of forces—good, sinister, and merely mercenary. Now that the PCs have the hourglass, you can send all sorts of mayhem their way.

By the end of the adventure, it should be clear to the PCs that the sebaceans have designs that extend far beyond one mysterious ziggurat. Furthermore, the PCs should have a healthy curiosity about the Mad Architects. Are the sebaceans the only entities that the Mad Architects have influenced in known reality? Unlikely. More monsters are certainly out there laying the groundwork for the Mad Architects' arrival. The PCs might be the only ones capable of uncovering and defeating the Far Realm horrors the Mad Architects have insinuated into the universe.

One or more of the mythological figures referred to in the ziggurat mosaics might have survived the fall of the empire that venerated them. These beings might yet live today. If this is the case, you don't need to do anything right away. Let the PCs go on further adventures, then reintroduce something that evokes their memories of mythology depicted in the ziggurat.

New Monster: Sebacean

Sebaceans are insectile creatures touched by the Far Realm. They claim to have come to the world to guard locations of mystical importance, awaiting the day when their masters breach reality and reclaim them.

Sebacean Gleaner	**Level 23 Controller**
Large aberrant magical beast	XP 5,100
Initiative +15	**Senses** Perception +18; darkvision
HP 215; **Bloodied** 107	
AC 37; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 36	
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)	
Speed 6, climb 4	
⊕ **Limb Blades** (standard; at-will)	
+28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage.	
☄ **Toxic Spittle** (standard; at-will)	
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Reflex, 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
☄ **Cocoon Prison** (standard; recharges when no enemy is restrained by this power)	
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 acid damage, and the target is restrained (save ends).	
⸸ **Hypnotic Toxin** (standard; recharge ⁞⁞)	
Reach 2; +27 vs. Will; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target is dominated (save ends).	
Adaptive Resistance	
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +23, History +23	
Str 19 (+15)	**Dex** 19 (+15) **Wis** 24 (+18)
Con 23 (+17)	**Int** 25 (+18) **Cha** 27 (+19)

Sebacean Gleaner Tactics

A sebacean gleaner initially avoids melee, opening with a *cocoon prison*. It then uses *toxic spittle* until the cocooned enemy saves, when *cocoon prison* becomes available again. If attacked in melee, it likes to use *hypnotic toxin* on its attacker. It sometimes employs *hypnotic toxin* on a cocooned enemy that just saved.

Sebacean Glider	Level 20 Skirmisher
Large aberrant magical beast	XP 2,800

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 191; **Bloodied** 95
AC 34; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 31
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, fly 10; see also *reactive teleport*

Limb Blades (standard; at-will)
+25 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage.

Flyby Attack (standard; at-will)
The sebacean glider flies up to 10 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The glider doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Reactive Teleport (immediate reaction, when the glider takes damage; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
The glider teleports 2 squares and attacks an adjacent creature; +25 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage.

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Stealth +23

Str 19 (+14)	**Dex** 26 (+18)	**Wis** 21 (+15)
Con 23 (+16)	**Int** 12 (+11)	**Cha** 14 (+12)

Sebacean Glider Tactics

A sebacean glider hangs on the edge of a battle, swooping in and out to deliver risk-free attacks. It tries to stay within two squares of multiple enemies to threaten as many as possible with *reactive teleport*.

Sebacean Gorger	Level 22 Brute
Large aberrant magical beast	XP 4,150 each

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 258; **Bloodied** 129; see also *bloodied fury*
AC 34; **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 30
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, climb 4

Limb Blades (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +25 (+27 while bloodied) vs. AC; 2d10 + 8 (2d10 + 10 while bloodied) damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Blade Shred (standard; recharges when an adjacent enemy becomes bloodied)
Close burst 1; +24 (+26 while bloodied) vs. AC; 2d10 + 8 (2d10 + 10 while bloodied) damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Bloodied Fury
The sebacean gorger gains +2 to attack rolls and damage rolls while bloodied (included above).

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech

Str 26 (+19)	**Dex** 18 (+15)	**Wis** 19 (+15)
Con 28 (+20)	**Int** 14 (+13)	**Cha** 15 (+13)

Sebacean Gorger Tactics

A sebacean gorger establishes melee contact with as many enemies as possible, so it can use *blade shred* early and often. The gorger and its allies concentrate attacks on enemies adjacent to the gorger, to ensure a faster recharge on *blade shred*.

Sebacean Guardian	Level 21 Soldier
Large aberrant magical beast	XP 3,200

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 199; **Bloodied** 99
AC 37; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 33
Resist 20 adaptive (see below)
Speed 6, climb 4

Limb Blades (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage and until the sebacean guardian's next turn, when the target shifts, the sebacean guardian can make a melee basic attack against it.

Heuristic Strike (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 1d10 + 10 damage. One condition that a save can end on the sebacean guardian ends, and the target gains that condition (save ends).

Threatening Reach
A sebacean guardian can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).

Adaptive Resistance
A sebacean gains resist 20 against the first damage type that damages it during an encounter. The resist lasts until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech

Str 26 (+18)	**Dex** 14 (+12)	**Wis** 23 (+16)
Con 23 (+16)	**Int** 12 (+11)	**Cha** 16 (+13)

Sebacean Guardian Tactics

A sebacean guardian has the simple job of standing on the front lines and defending its allies. It uses *limb blades* and *threatening reach* to pin enemies down, positioning itself so allies can maneuver for defensive and offensive spots. So it can use its *heuristic strike*, a guardian deliberately draws the attention of controllers and other enemies that might inflict conditions that end on a save.

Sebacean Mutant Ape	Level 18 Minion
Medium aberrant beast	XP 500
Initiative +14	**Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	
AC 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30	
Speed 8, climb 8	
(+) **Limb Blades** (standard; at-will)	
+23 vs. AC; 9 damage.	
Dying Howl (when reduced to 0 hit points)	
Each other sebacean mutant ape within 10 squares gains +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn. This bonus stacks with that from other sebacean mutant apes' *dying howls*.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Deep Speech
Str 25 (+16)	**Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 21 (+14)
Con 23 (+15)	**Int** 5 (+6) **Cha** 15 (+12)

Sebacean Mutant Ape Tactics

These apes, twisted by the ritual magic of the sebacean gleaners, seize advantageous ground and surround their enemies. They are bred to attack in packs, staying within 10 squares of most other mutant apes so each *dying howl* allows them to become briefly more effective.

Sebacean Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Dungeoneering check.

DC 25: Sebaceans were first identified and named by the warlock Karlerrea in her *Bestiary of the Hideous*, a sought-after reference work. After encountering a nest of them amid ancient obelisks in a remote desert, she reported that they fiercely guarded the obelisks, but did not pursue her and her retinue. Karlerrea identified four types of sebaceans, seemingly organized like hive insects.

Sebaceans are known to lurk in the desolate wildernesses of the cosmos. They bide their time, keeping ancient sites and treasures safe for some inscrutable purpose.

DC 30: A possibly apocryphal *Annotations to the Bestiary* penned by Karlerrea indicated that an individual sebacean's caste is easy to identify from the coloration on its carapace. Guardians are red-brown, and gorgers have a mottled green-and-black pattern. Gleaners are pale white and faintly luminescent; their necks are also longer than the other sebaceans. The gliders are black, but their insectile wings are a more obvious point of distinction.

Sebaceans have a caste society, and the gleaners lead them. These sebaceans are potent ritualists, capable of constructing magical traps and altering local creatures into servitors. They can also spin filaments of crystal, which they use to build traps,

"Your puny minds cannot fathom the untold wonders when the Mad Architects remake this world! Go now, and live out your ignorant mortal lives!"

contain their ritual subjects, or temporarily restrain their foes.

All sebaceans converse in Deep Speech, their cadence ponderous. Most sebaceans have a basic understanding of Common, but gleaners have mastered the language from scrying on the "lesser races" in the vicinity of their lairs. In most cases, however, sebaceans only speak to give orders or disseminate necessary information.

DC 35: Divinations performed by the archmage Oriel the Thrice-Blessed suggest that the sebaceans are guarding specific locations around the world in anticipation to an invasion from a master race known as the Mad Architects. Further research and ritual divination to learn more about the Mad Architects has not been fruitful. The sebaceans believe that the Mad Architects are even now preparing their campaign from their unimaginable home in the Far Realm.

Sebaceans speak of the Mad Architects, other than to name them, only in veiled threats and ravings about the end of the world. Every sebacean is utterly certain that, when the time is right, the Mad Architects shall manifest themselves in this world—presumably in the places that the sebaceans are guarding. Then these mysterious and malevolent beings will begin their campaign of universal conquest—or consumption.

If the Mad Architects exist and created the sebaceans, they never gifted their creations with the concept of leisure or complex emotions. Sebaceans can't "feel" anything beyond a sense of frustration or satisfaction. So no sebacean art or culture exists. Other than the gleaners and their experiments, sebaceans only to wait for the time when their Far Realm masters come to the cosmos.

Encounter Groups

Sebaceans don't roam. They guard locations and objects for eventual use by the Mad Architects. So when they're encountered, it's almost always in the context of a site-based adventure. And because sebaceans don't harbor ambitions beyond "keep this place safe until the Mad Architects invade," they often arrange alliances of convenience with the other denizens of a site.

Level 21 Encounter (XP 18,450)

- 2 sebacean guardians (level 21 soldier)
- 1 sebacean gorger (level 22 brute)
- 1 sebacean glider (level 20 skirmisher)
- 1 sebacean gleaner (level 23 controller)

The Deluvian Hourglass

The hourglass is appropriate for epic-level characters. It functions best in the hands of a character that uses an implement to make attacks. Unlike most artifacts, the *Deluvian Hourglass* requires a particular sort of fuel to power its most potent magic: primordial sand. The owner earns primordial sand by defeating epic foes (see the sidebar), but over time the hourglass demands ever more powerful primordial sand.

Because the hourglass hops around from one point in history to another in disregard for time's ordinary sequence, telling the history of such an artifact is problematic. The *Deluvian Hourglass* was present at the dawn of time, but only because it sent itself there, not because it was actually created there. It can't predict the future, so it can't know when the world's end is nigh.

A mighty primordial known as Deluvius fashioned the hourglass amid the tumult of the war between the primordials and the gods. As was common among the elemental forces in the early days of that war, Deluvius assumed that the primordials would eventually be victorious and expunge the gods' "improvements" from the cosmos, if not destroy creation outright. Deluvius created the hourglass as a way of marking time until the primordials' inevitable victory.

But the gods defeated the primordials in that Dawn War, and thus the hourglass has outlived its creator. It still waits for the end of the world and has a spark of Deluvius's desire to see the universe destroyed. But in the countless ages since the fall of the primordials, the hourglass has seen enough to know that the end of all things won't necessarily come at the hands of the its erstwhile masters.

The Deluvian Hourglass **Epic Level**

This roughly shaped hourglass is festooned with jewels that glow with inner elemental light. Its metal parts are dull silver, but they shift as if they were mercury. Inside the hourglass is a small mound of black sand.

The *Deluvian Hourglass* is a +5 *implement* with the following properties and powers.

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +5d6 damage, + 5d8 damage to immortal creatures

Property: The bearer of the hourglass is considered to be four levels higher when performing divination and scrying rituals.

Power (Encounter): Immediate Reaction. Use this power when you fail a saving throw. Reroll the saving throw.

Power (Daily): Free Action. You can speed up time for yourself alone. You gain an extra standard action during your next turn. This power consumes 1 ounce of primordial sand.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. You can perform a *time stop* (wizard 22). This power consumes 1 ounce of primordial sand.

Goals of the Deluvian Hourglass

- Be present at moments of great historic significance, especially ones where future events hinge on the efforts of a few extraordinary individuals.
- Travel time and space to learn more about essential cosmic forces.
- Hasten the end of the world.

Roleplaying the Deluvian Hourglass

Insofar as the hourglass has a personality clear to mortals, it's an erratic and fickle presence. The shifting of the sands within the hourglass sounds like a whisper to its owner. At first, the hourglass has little to say, other than to briefly explain how its powers work and how to acquire more primordial sand. But as the hourglass sees the adventures that its possessor is undertaking, it starts to offer advice. It often suggests that its possessor use it to perform divination rituals that inquire about cosmos-shaking threats. As if it has observed this truth, it speaks in mysterious riddles about how things happen over and over again, without changing.

But the hourglass doesn't necessarily reveal its true purpose, which is to see creation's ending. It encourages its possessor to do battle with forces that wish to end the world . . . up until the moment when significant success or failure hangs in the balance. It then urges its owner to hasten the end. But the hourglass does so with no malice, and it doesn't display any sign of bearing a grudge if the owner doesn't agree. It continues to serve its possessor according to the concordance score.

Primordial Sand

The *Deluvian Hourglass* starts with 2 ounces of primordial sand. It consumes primordial sand each time you use its mightiest powers. Fortunately, the hourglass can make more sand for itself. Whenever the party kills an epic-level, nonminion aberrant or immortal enemy in a battle where you used the hourglass, the hourglass destroys the body and leaves a one-ounce pile of primordial sand. It does so to only one enemy per battle, only the highest-level enemy in that battle, and only 1d3 times per day. Further, the enemy turned into sand must be of your level or higher.

Concordance

Starting score	5
Owner gains a level	+1d10
Owner places an ounce of primordial sand in the hourglass	+1
Owner makes significant progress on a quest involving the potential end of the world (maximum 1/week)	+1
Owner remains on the same plane for 1 week	-1
Hourglass has no primordial sand (maximum 1/week)	-2
Owner prevents the world's end (maximum 1/week)	-2

Pleased (16–20)

The force I wield is beyond time itself. How can you hope to hold out against its onslaught?

At this point, the hourglass is where it wants to be: on the cusp of world-shaking events. It continues to use its power to push its owner to be decisive and reach the point where the fate of the world hangs in the balance.

The *Deluvian Hourglass* enhancement bonus increases to +6.
Critical: +6d6 damage, + 6d8 damage to immortal creatures
Power (Encounter): Immediate Interrupt. Use this power when you are hit by an attack. You can force an enemy to reroll any successful attack from the beginning of its resolution. If the rerolled attack fails to hit, then the enemy repeats that attack a third time—but this time you make all the decisions about the attack's targeting.

Satisfied (12–15)

Fear not, friends. If something goes wrong, I can turn back time and correct it.

The hourglass senses the potential within its wielder, but it doesn't believe that the true potential has been awakened yet. So it continues to urge its owner toward acts that involve greater conflicts and titanic struggles.

Power (Encounter): Immediate Interrupt. Use this power when ally misses with an attack. That ally can reroll the failed attack, and if the attack hits, it deals an extra 10 damage.

Normal (5–11)

When the sand moves, I can hear it talking to me. And it says that the world is relying on us.

The hourglass is content to observe the world, searching for two pieces of information: evidence that the skeins of time are drawing tightly around some momentous event in the future, and confirmation that its current owner is destined to play an important role in that struggle. The hourglass hasn't seen proof of either, but it is patient.

Unsatisfied (1–4)

I get the feeling that the hourglass is responsible for the strange events we've been experiencing.

Frustrated with its owner, the hourglass tries to twist the strands of time to force a change in ownership. Or it tries to give a sense that the will of the *Deluvian Hourglass* is not to be trifled with. It uses the following property for maximum mischief, trying to shift the tide of battle and put the outcome in doubt.

Property: Once per day, as an immediate interrupt when an ally hits with an attack, the hourglass can force that ally to reroll the attack. The attack deals only half damage even if it hits.

Angered (0 or lower)

Help! The hourglass is trapping me within an endless loop of time! Stop it!

The hourglass is patient, but it knows firsthand that time is precious. It functions normally until a critical juncture in the battle, then it unleashes the following property at the worst possible time for the PCs. When possible, the hourglass traps an ally, not the owner. It wants to isolate the owner from friends and convince the owner to voluntarily relinquish it.

Property: Once per encounter, as an immediate reaction to any action, the hourglass can trap any creature within a loop of time, forcing that creature to perform the exact same action it performed the previous round (save ends). At the beginning of its turn, the creature in the time loop teleports back to the square where it started the previous turn. Then it repeats the same sequence of actions, with no variation and without regard to the frequency of the power used or the presence of enemies.

Moving On

The hourglass disappears with little fanfare if it reaches a concordance of angered and its owner voluntarily relinquishes it. It sticks around long enough to allow an improvement in concordance and to toy with its owner.

Conversely, the hourglass thanks its owner and departs if it reaches a concordance of pleased but believes that the battle for the end of the world is more likely to occur elsewhere—perhaps with a less-capable and more-pliable owner. In this case, the hourglass leaves behind a non-artifact copy of itself that functions as a +5 (or +6 if appropriate) *implement* that has the property and first two powers described in the statistics.

The final likely way the hourglass moves on—and its preferred means—is for the known cosmos to come to an end. When that happens, the last act of the hourglass is to cast itself back to the dawn of time so it can experience the breadth of history all over again.

About the Author
David Noonan is a game designer for Wizards of the Coast, Inc. He contributed to the 4th edition core rules and co-wrote the *Scepter Tower of Spellgard* adventure. He lives in Washington state with his wife and two children.

HEROIC

1–10

"This is a mission for heroes who have shown their mettle in the defense of others. If the evidence you have uncovered is true, the Siege of Bordrin's Watch was but the first sortie in a larger campaign, against which Overlook and Elsir Vale cannot stand for long. I will tell you of the Karak Lode, and of lost wealth with which we might defend our land against the war that is coming."

The Lost Mines of Karak

SCALES OF WAR™

by Greg A. Vaughan with James Larrison

illustrations by Wayne Reynolds, Rob Alexander, and Ryan Barger

cartography by Mike Schley

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"The Lost Mines of Karak" is an adventure for five 6th-level characters. Characters should be midway through 7th level by the adventure's end. This adventure is the sequel to "The Shadow Rift of the Umbraforge" and the fourth part of the *Scales of War* adventure path. However, with a little modification, it can be played as a standalone adventure or integrated into any existing wilderness campaign in an area where a dwarven kingdom might once have stood.

Adventure Background

The city of Overlook stands at the base of the Stonehome Mountains at the farthest western reaches of the Elsir Vale. This age-old redoubt was the center of the ancient dwarf-kingdom that once dominated the vale, but which faded into obscurity generations ago.

Though little is remembered of this lost kingdom, its folk ventured far and wide in their day. One dwarf clan—the Ironfell—made forays in search of mineral wealth in the deserts beyond the Thornwaste to the southwest of Elsir Vale. There, they established a mine they called the Karak Lode, after the first dwarf of Clan Ironfell to fall in its defense.

Over long years, Karak became a legendary source of wealth as its folk pulled rich deposits of gold, silver, and other precious metals from beneath the desert sands. A supply depot was established at the desert's edge to service the caravans traveling between the mine and Elsir Vale, but the location of the Karak Lode was kept a closely guarded secret. Only oath-sworn members of Clan Ironfell ever made the final leg of the journey across the sands.

Dwarves hold their secrets close, and their grip is doubly tight where wealth is concerned. So it was that Karak's secrecy eventually became its downfall. Under the pressure of monstrous marauders, famine, and migrant human tribes, the dwarf kingdom of Elsir Vale declined. As its resources were taxed past the breaking point, the kingdom's borders began to contract until little more than the territory immediately surrounding Overlook was left. In time, sandstorms struck the southern wastes and the Karak supply depot was abandoned. Soon, all contact with the mine was lost, and the Karak Lode was consigned to history.

Adventure Synopsis

After their successes in "Siege of Bordrin's Watch" and "Shadow Rift of the Umbraforge," the PCs have established something of a reputation for themselves within Overlook. The party is introduced to a wealthy dwarf named Bram Ironfell, a member of the Elsir Consortium and scion of Clan Ironfell.

Bram takes the PCs into his confidence as he tells them of the recent discovery of a parchment connected to the shadar-kai arms dealer Sarshan. Bram believes that the parchment details the location of the Karak Lode—a mine belonging to his clan that has been lost for generations. Bram hopes that if the mine is found, its wealth can be used to defend Overlook and the Elsir Vale against the brewing conflict that the PCs saw hints of in the Shadowfell.

Following the directions on the ancient scroll, the party heads south past the Westdeep and into the dry lands known as the Thornwaste. There, they are beset by dwarf warriors from a rival clan who have caught wind of Bram's discovery. They also encounter a wanderer named Mag Blackthorn, from whom they can seek guidance through the treacherous wastes.

Beyond the Thornwaste, the PCs come to Dunesend—a small village at the edge of the desert, controlled by a cruel gnoll called the Warden. After defeating the Warden and his allies, the PCs learn that the village is held in thrall by a mysterious desert despot calling herself Shephatiah, Queen of the Drylands.

The Warden's path through the desert follows a forgotten track to Shephatiah's lair in a lost mine—the

Quests

"Lost Mines of Karak" offers the opportunity for PCs to earn quest XP in a couple of places. Provided here is the list of quests, and their rewards, in the adventure.

Major Quest—Lost Karak: The PCs undertake an arduous journey across wasteland and desert in an attempt to locate the lost mines of the Karak Lode. They complete this quest upon their successful return to Overlook, having secured the mines against the depredations of Queen Shephatiah and her followers.

Reward: 1,250 XP.

Minor Quest—Saving Dunesend: The folk of the tiny village of Dunesend have become unwitting vassals of the Queen of the Drylands. By overcoming the immediate threat of Shephatiah's lieutenant (the Warden) and routing her in Karak, the PCs free the village from further threats and earn the gratitude of its people.

Reward: 250 XP.

Karak Lode. However, the PCs find the ancient dwarven ruins occupied and defended by desert raiders and foul subterranean creatures led by an evil dryad. However, though the PCs make short work of the queen and her followers, they can find no trace of the mines.

As they wait out a sandstorm, the PCs find themselves beset by a band of cavern choker assassins led by a troglodyte curse chanter. Only by retracing the steps of these marauders do the characters locate the previously hidden entrance to the mines. There, the true Queen Shephatiah holds court.

Exploring the ancient dwarven caverns, the PCs battle Shephatiah's followers before confronting the real Queen of the Drylands—a powerful naga. Having discovered a rift linking the mines with the Elemental Chaos, Shephatiah has made the Karak Lode her lair. However, after defeating the naga and her servants, the PCs uncover evidence that Karak's wealth is now controlled by an unknown group from another plane.

The PCs return to Overlook and recount their findings to Bram Ironfell, who tells them he will leave the mine sealed. However, the forces responsible for shipping the mine's wealth through the Elemental Chaos have a long reach and dark plans.

Preparing for Adventure

"Lost Mines of Karak" takes the PCs across the arid badlands known as the Thornwaste, then into the desert beyond in search of the Karak Lode. On their journey of exploration, the PCs find themselves under assault by Queen Shephatiah's forces aboveground and below, culminating in a deadly showdown alongside a rift leading to the Elemental Chaos. If you are pressed for time before beginning the adventure, read the adventure background and synopsis, "Part 1: The Road to Karak," "Through the Thornwaste," and the first two encounters. This gets the PCs caught up in the adventure and into the village of Dunesend—an action-packed first session of play.

What You Need to Play

This adventure contains everything you need to play, including background information, setup, and encounters (including tactical maps). Reading through the Dungeons & Dragons *4th Edition* rules is your first best step to understanding and preparing to run the adventure. As mentioned above, read through at least the opening sections and initial encounters before starting. This review enables you to become familiar with the material and the style of presentation. The sections below describe the adventure format.

Using Tactical Encounters

Each encounter includes several common elements.

Encounter Level

Each tactical encounter assumes a group of five player characters. An encounter of average difficulty is one where the encounter level is equal to the level of the party. Encounters that are 1 or 2 levels lower than the party are easy encounters, while encounters that are a higher level than the party are difficult encounters.

For overcoming an encounter, a group earns the XP value noted beside the encounter level. This amount should be divided by the number of group members, and an equal amount should be awarded to each character.

Setup

This section of a tactical encounter provides you with the basic parameters of the encounter. First, it provides a key to the monsters in the encounter so you can locate them on the tactical map. Next, it provides context or background information for the encounter. The map of each encounter area indicates where the monsters are located when the encounter begins. The setup section also describes what the monsters are doing and how they react when the PCs arrive.

Read Aloud Text

Read aloud text provides information detailing what the characters can see and are aware of. You do not have to read it word for word; feel free to paraphrase and use your own words when describing this information.

Use read aloud text wisely. It is written for the most common approach to a particular situation, but what your player characters do might require you to alter the information in any number of ways.

Monster Statistics

Encounters include stat blocks for each monster type present in the encounter. If more than one monster of a particular kind is present, the stat block indicates how many creatures can be found.

Tactics

This entry describes special actions the monsters take to defeat the adventurers. Sometimes this means the monsters take advantage of special features of the area or make use of special powers or equipment.

Map

Each encounter includes a map keyed with the initial locations of each monster. The map also indicates the location of any special features of the area.

Features of the Area

This section describes special features noted on the map. If the location has items or areas of interest with which the characters can interact, those features are described here. Look here to see if a door is out of the ordinary, if an altar has a secret compartment, or if the area includes treasure.

Treasure Preparation

As with the previous installments of the Scales of War adventure path, this adventure makes use of the parcel system of treasure rewards described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The characters should accumulate 14 parcels by the end of the adventure. You can supply these treasures in whatever way you wish, but the following sidebar presents the most likely areas to feature treasure. During your preparation, assign parcels from those that follow to the areas in the spaces provided. Use the players' wish lists to come up with magic items for the first six parcels.

TREASURE PARCELS

Parcel A: _____, Clan Rivals.
Parcel B: _____, The Warden.
Parcel C: _____, The Warden.
Parcel D: _____, Desert Patrol.
Parcel E: _____, Courtyard.
Parcel F: _____, Area 10.
Parcel G: _____, Guard Hall.
Parcel H: _____, Great Hall.
Parcel I: _____, Great Hall.
Parcel J: _____, Crypts.
Parcel K: _____, Mine Entrance.
Parcel L: _____, Chaos Mines.
Parcel M: _____, Queen's Retinue.
Parcel N: _____, Queen's Retinue.

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the following parcels can go in the spaces above. Rely on the wish lists your players gave you for the first four parcels.

Parcel 1: Magic item, level 10
Parcel 2: Magic item, level 9
Parcel 3: Magic item, level 9
Parcel 4: Magic item, level 8
Parcel 5: Magic item, level 7
Parcel 6: Magic item, level 7
Parcel 7: Two 250 gp art objects + 500 gp
Parcel 8: 900 gp
Parcel 9: Four 100 gp gems + 400 gp
Parcel 10: One 250 gp art object + two *potions of healing* + 250 gp
Parcel 11: 600 gp
Parcel 12: Three 100 gp gems
Parcel 13: One *potion of healing* + two 100 gp gems + 50 gp
Parcel 14: Two *potions of healing* + 100 gp

Part 1: The Road to Karak

The adventure begins in the city of Overlook, where the PCs were left at the end of "Shadow Rift of the Umbraforge." However, if the PCs have traveled elsewhere since the end of that adventure, the initial setup below can take place in Brindol or any other settlement between Elsir Vale and the mountains.

Sarshan's Plots

As a result of saving the city not once but twice, the PCs have become well known in Overlook. This notoriety sees them approached by Kalad, the dwarf paladin they rescued in "Siege of Bordrin's Watch." In the aftermath of the thwarted raid, Kalad has taken up a position as a sergeant in the Overlook watch. It is official business that brings him to the PCs, where he asks them to meet with a member of the Elsir Consortium (see "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," page 19). If Kalad did not survive the previous adventure, some other emissary of the guard seeks the party out.

At a time of the PCs' choosing, Kalad escorts them to a private room in an upscale Elftown tavern. There, he introduces them to a well-dressed dwarf wearing the rich robes of a successful merchant, his golden beard braided with silver bands.

"Greetings, Heroes of Overlook. I am Bram Ironfell of the Clan Ironfell and representative of the Elsir Consortium. Your reputations precede you, and for your actions, you have my personal thanks in addition to that of the city. I have a tale I wish to share with you, over dinner and drinks of course."

Bram relates the information found in the "Adventure Background" section, which you can read or paraphrase as you see fit. Then read the following.

"The location of the Karak Lode was known to few even within the clan, and it was thought that all who had such knowledge were lost when the mines were reclaimed by the desert. Even within the clan, Karak is all but forgotten. However, recent events might change that.

"The destruction of Sarshan's operations in Overlook saw the shadar-kai's many warehouses and transit points raided. In one of those raids, the watch uncovered documents connected to Sarshan's operations, including an ancient fragment of parchment. On it was written a list of landmarks and bearings for a journey, along with the name of Clan Ironfell. I had never seen this parchment before. However, at the watch's request, I undertook a bit of research into my family's archives. If what I discovered there holds true, this parchment holds the directions to the Karak Lode."

Although Bram Ironfell obviously has a personal stake in the search for the lost mines, he downplays his own self-interest. If the information the PCs discovered in "Shadow Rift of the Umbraforge" has not yet become common knowledge in Overlook, Bram has already guessed correctly that the siege of Bordrin's Watch represents a larger threat to Elsir Vale.

"Discovering what became of my kin would end a sad chapter in Ironfell history, but that is not my primary motive in seeking your aid. If the Karak Lode can be found, its wealth offers the means to shore up the defenses of Overlook and the Elsir Vale. However, it is anyone's guess what manner of creatures might lair there, or what defenses the last of the clan left to guard the mines. This is not a job for the city watch, I fear."

Bram offers the PCs 1,000 gp (half in gold, half in gems) as an upfront payment for undertaking the search for the Karak Lode. In addition, the PCs can claim any other treasure they recover along the way.

Following the directions to the Karak Lode, the PCs first head south across the Thornwaste that stretches between Elsir Vale and the Stonehome Mountains. (On the area map in "Rescue at Rivenroar," the Thornwaste is the area directly west of the Wyvernwatch Mountains.) A four-day journey takes the PCs to a location Bram believes was once the ancient supply depot for the mines. From there, the PCs must head south into the heart of the desert.

Bram Ironfell's Secret

The parchment is genuine, but there is more to Bram Ironfell's story than he lets on. For more than a year, the dwarf has been one of Sarshan's agents in the city, using his position on the Elsir Consortium to aid the shadar-kai's operations.

Bram's story of how the directions to Karak were found in one of Sarshan's warehouses is the truth. However, it was the dwarf who originally sent them to Sarshan after discovering them in a cache of family records months before. Bram was in the process of seeking the shadar-kai's aid in locating and clearing out the mine. With Sarshan's operations shut down, the dwarf now needs a new set of agents to find the Karak Lode and overcome whatever defenses might be found there.

The PCs can make Sense Motive checks against Bram, but the dwarf's stated intention in using the wealth of the mines to defend Overlook and Elsir Vale is entirely truthful. If the PCs have previously heard of the consortium's secret plots to replace the ruling council with a hand-picked body loyal to the merchants' own interests, Kalad confirms that Bram is known to be opposed to that group. (In truth, the canny dwarf opposes them because he plans to one day rule the council single-handedly.)

Kalad is familiar with the Ironfell clan and vouches for Bram's good character. However, his duties with the watch prevent him from accompanying the party on their mission.

Through the Thornwaste **Level 6**
Skill Challenge XP 750

South of the Westdeep, the broken ground of the Thornwaste stretches before you. Ridges of knife-edged stone spread as far as the eye can see, interspersed with heavy growths of twisted brambles. Your first investigation of these reveal that their thorns are iron-sharp, capable of drawing blood even through the thickest clothing. No trail or tracks lead into the wasteland ahead.

This skill challenge sees the PCs make their way across the desolate landscape of the Thornwaste, seeking the supply depot that marks the beginning of their journey into the desert.

The Thornwaste is a parched landscape of washed-out gullies and tangled briars. The directions from the parchment indicate that a road once passed this way, but it has long since disappeared. Though the area appears inhospitable, dozens of species of desert animal dwell here, hunted by predators including lions and wild boar.

The PCs meet Mag Blackthorn (see below) after their second success or first failure (whichever comes first) in the skill challenge. The first combat encounter ("Clan Rivals," page 72) takes place after the party's fourth success or second failure.

Complexity 3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills Endurance, Nature, Perception.

Other Skills Nature, Perception.

Victory If the PCs achieve 8 successes before 3 failures, they emerge from the Thornwaste near Dunesend.

Defeat If the PCs get 3 failures before attaining 8 successes, they stumble out of the Thornwaste one day away from Dunesend. This extra day of travel costs each PC 1 extra healing surge. Additionally, the party attracts the attention of a satyr rake that shadows them, then joins the combat in "The Warden" encounter.

Special If the PCs ally themselves with Mag Blackthorn, they gain a +2 bonus to further checks in this skill challenge.

Endurance (DC 12). The PCs must endure the harsh environment and deadly briars of the barren Thornwaste as they make their way south.

This is a group check. One character acts as lead, while the others make checks to aid that character. Each ally that gets a result of 10 or higher provides a +2 bonus to the lead character's check (which counts as the check to determine a success or a failure). A failed check indicates that all members of the party lose one healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the challenge.

Nature (DC 12). The PC makes a Nature check to help find a safe path through the briars, or to find sufficient water to sustain the group.

Perception (DC 17). The PC seeks and finds a good vantage point atop a stony ridge, from which the best path can be seen through the scrubland ahead.

Nature or Perception (DC 12). The PC notes signs of predatory beasts or finds a remnant of the ancient dwarf track through the wastes. On a successful check, the next primary skill check made in the challenge gains a +2 bonus. This use of these skills does not count as a success or failure toward the completion of this challenge.

Mag Blackthorn

After their second success or first failure in the skill challenge, the PCs happen upon another wanderer in the Thornwaste.

In the distance, you spot something. Slipping through the brush and brambles is a human male in a tattered black coat and leggings. A battered, wide-brimmed hat shrouds his face, his boots held together with coarse twine. He carries a spear in one hand, a leather-bound book in the other.

Mag Blackthorn is a ranger and a disciple of the Ghostlord—a legendary druid lich said to linger within the Thornwaste. (The Ghostlord appears in the 3rd edition adventure *Red Hand of Doom*, but does not play a part in this adventure path.)

Mag hails the PCs, declaring himself protector of the Thornwaste and demanding to know their business. If the characters react in an even-handed manner and indicate that they are simply passing through, Mag relaxes and becomes friendly. If the PCs react with hostility, Mag challenges one of them to a duel for the right of passage.

Once the challenge is issued, a DC 18 Diplomacy check is necessary to get Mag back on friendly footing. If the PCs take up his challenge, this DC increases to 23. If Mag is fought and defeated in single combat, he becomes automatically friendly (and apologetic) if he is allowed to live.

Mag knows nothing of Karak if he is asked about the mines, though he identifies Dunesend as the only settlement in the vicinity of the PCs route.

Mag Blackthorn, Ranger **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (human) XP 250

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35
AC 20; **Fortitude 16, Reflex** 19, **Will** 19
Speed 6

Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage.

Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage

Defensive Mobility
Mag gains a +2 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks.

Hunter's Quarry (minor; at-will)
Mag can designate the enemy nearest to him as his quarry. Once per round, he deals +1d6 damage to his quarry. This effect remains active until the end of the encounter, until the quarry is defeated, or until he designates a different target as his quarry.

Nimble Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage; Mag shifts 1 before or after the attack.

Disruptive Strike (immediate interrupt, when Mag or an ally is attacked by a creature; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage. *Hit:* The target takes a -6 penalty to its attack roll.

Splintering Shot (standard; daily) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +11 vs. AC. *Hit:* 3d8 + 6 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the encounter. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target takes a -1 penalty to attack roles until the end of the encounter.

Weave Through the Fray (immediate interrupt, when an enemy moves adjacent to Mag; encounter)
Mag can shift 3 squares.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Nature +11, Endurance +10

Str 13 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+6)	**Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5)	**Int** 11 (+3)	**Cha** 10 (+3)

Equipment warhammer, crossbow, quiver of 15 bolts

He is willing to escort the PCs through the Thornwaste, granting a +2 bonus to subsequent checks in the skill challenge. Once within sight of Dunesend, Mag wishes the party well and departs back into the scrubland.

Showdown in Dunesend

The village of Dunesend marks the frontier of two equally desolate lands. To the north lies the forbidding Thornwaste, across which only the most experienced—or most desperate—explorers tread. To the south, endless desert dunes march to the far horizon.

As the PCs approach the edge of the village from the north, they find one of Queen Shephatiah's lieutenants—a gnoll demonic scourge called "the Warden"—in the process of collecting the village's tribute.

Tactical Encounter: The Warden (page 74).

Dunesend

Village, Population 183

Dunesend was built on the ruins of the dwarven supply depot that once served Clan Ironfell's hidden mining operations in the desert. All that remains of the original dwarven enclave are scattered foundations and a single watchtower. However, the dwarves' carefully constructed system of spring-fed wells and cisterns still functions, allowing those who dwell here to farm the scrubland and eke out an existence in the harsh landscape.

In years past, trade caravans made Dunesend a waypoint along an east-west road. Today, the road is sand and the caravans have all but vanished. The handful of families remaining in Dunesend do so because they have nowhere else to go.

Leadership: Lotho Elberesk, owner of the Dunesend caravansary is a village elder and the settlement's de facto leader.

Demographics: The isolated population of Dunesend are all human with the exception of Bede, the halfling baker. Though they have little exposure to nonhumans, the folk of the village have no malice or prejudice against them.

1. Serpent Wall

This weathered stone wall is formed of ancient basalt blocks and carved in the form of a serpentine creature with a crest running down its back. It stretches for miles in either direction, marking the end of the rolling desert sands and the beginning of the Thornwaste. A wooden stockade gate of recent construction features great serpent-headed gate posts.

With a DC 17 History check, a PC recalls that the serpent wall was here long before the dwarven supply depot was established. It dates back thousands of years to an ancient serpent kingdom that once ruled this region.

2. Public Well

This bucket-drawn stone well features a wooden roof set on stanchions. This can be lowered during high winds to keep blown sand out of the village's water supply. The well is part of the ancient dwarven waterworks, and holds an inexhaustible supply of fresh water even during the driest months.

3. Smithy

An aged human named Darkus Comahni works the forge here, repairing tools and household implements for the villagers. Though he has little call for it, he can repair weapons and armor as well.

4. Dunesend Caravansary

Built on the foundations of an older dwarven hostel, the caravansary once served the traders that regularly passed through this farflung outpost. A low wall of mud bricks surrounds a courtyard that encloses another well, an outbuilding, and a small herd of goats. On those rare occasions when travelers stop in Dunesend, an adjacent paddock is opened up for their animals.

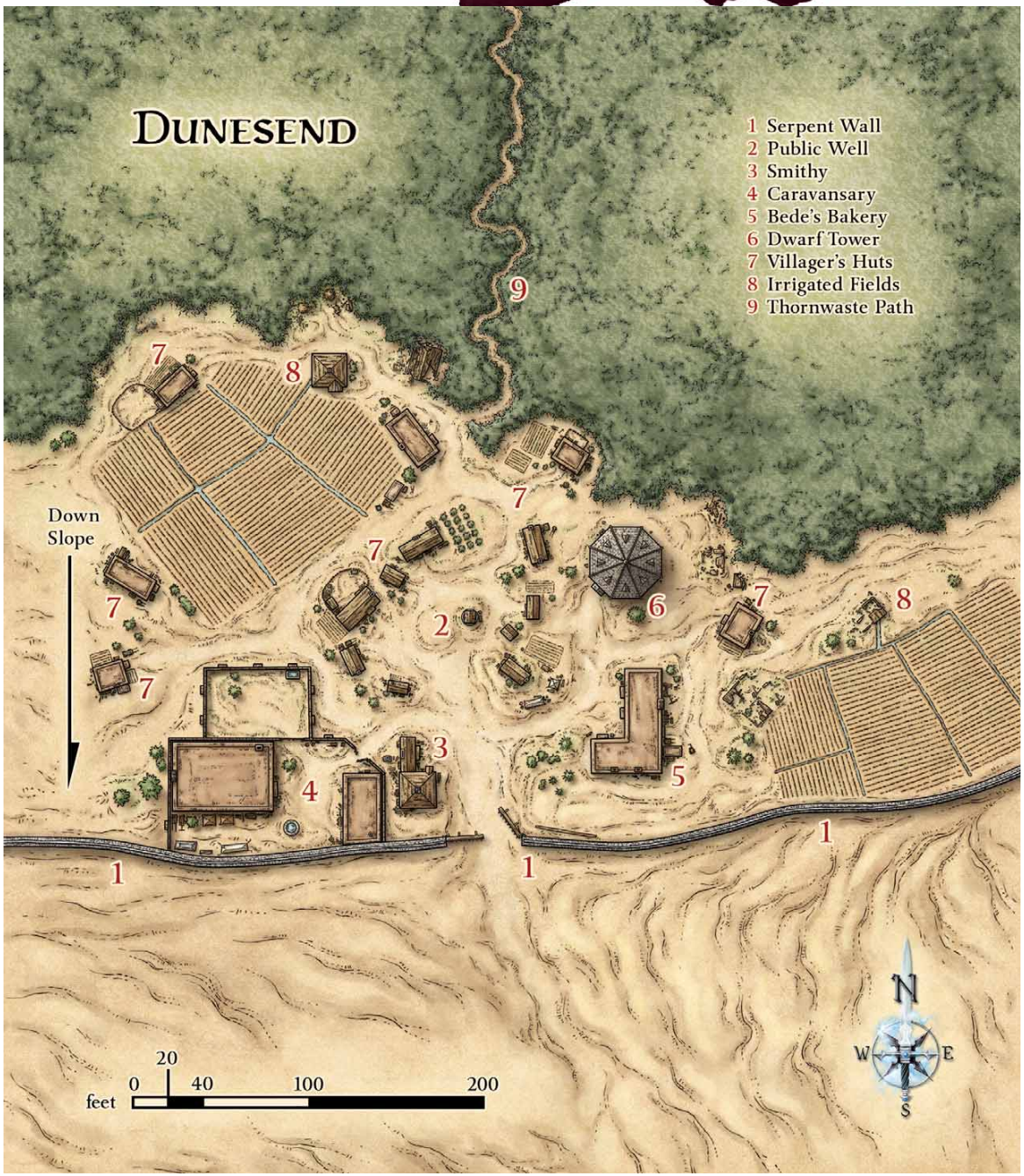
Lotho Elberesk is the proprietor here. He lives within the main building, where he runs a poorly stocked trading post. Twice a week, the caravansary courtyard becomes a barter market where the locals trade crops, goat, lamb, and wild boar hunted in the Thornwaste.

5. Bede's Bakery

A wizened halfling from distant eastern lands runs a bakery whose half-dozen tables provide the village's only communal gathering place. Old Bede can usually be found by the fire pit, smoking an exotic pipe as he strokes his long gray mustache. He is an excellent source of information regarding the village, though his accent is heavy. Bede keeps accounts for the villagers who spend their evenings here, trading his goods for labor. PCs can buy a cup of sweet tea and a pastry for 1 cp.

6. Dwarf Tower

This stout watchtower is built of great blocks of granite imported from the Wyvernswatch mountains. The only surviving part of the dwarven supply depot, it serves as Dunesend's defensive redoubt as well as a shrine to Melora, the village's matron deity. It is attended by the aging priestess Fawma Bruth, a cleric who retired to the wilderness long ago. She has the



healing word power (3rd level), which she uses for any PCs who make a stand against the Warden.

7. Villagers' Huts

Each of these simple structures of mud bricks and scavenged wood holds a single family of eight villagers and their animals.

8. Irrigated Fields

These are just two of a dozen fields of crops bordering the Thornwaste along the wall to the east and west of the village. Each has a crude wooden pump house containing still-functioning dwarven pumps that bring water from underground cisterns to the surface.

The Situation in Dunesend

In the aftermath of the encounter with the Warden, the PCs find themselves in a complex dilemma. The folk of Dunesend have been saved from the predations of the Warden and his allies, but they fear that reprisals from Queen Shephatiah will soon follow. As a result, most of the villagers are noticeably cool toward the PCs, though none are hostile.

If Darkus Comahni is approached as he gathers up the remains of his apprentice for burial, a DC 12 Diplomacy check inspires him to speak to the PCs. Likewise, a DC 17 Diplomacy check inspires Lotho Elberesk or the halfling Bede to open up. Attempts to communicate with other villagers result only in sullen anger.

"The queen's wrath will surely come down on us. Where will you outsiders be then, I wonder?"

In response to specific questions, Elberesk, Darkus, or Bede respond with the following:

What was going on here? Who was that gnoll and those other creatures?

"That creature was the Warden, a foul tyrant that serves the Queen of the Drylands. The blue worm was his steed and enforcer, and it has slain several among us in recent months. The others were creatures of the Thornwaste in league with the Warden. They are the ones that prevent us from fleeing this place or seeking aid for our plight.

"The Warden was here to make his monthly collection of tribute. Poor weather has delayed our crops, but he accused us of holding out. He used poor Vaudnim to set an example for us all."

Where did the Warden come from? Why was he collecting tribute? Who is the Queen of the Drylands?

"The Warden first appeared from the desert a year ago, stating that Queen Shephatiah had come to reclaim her ancient throne. The name meant nothing to us, but the Warden slew several of our strongest when we stood against him. Now he orders us to pay tribute in goods and food or his blue worm will devour us."

Where can this Queen Shephatiah be found? Are there more of her followers?

"The satyrs live within the Thornwaste along the desert frontier. Like the shifter brigands of the desert, they have eagerly pledged themselves to the Warden's service. The Warden comes always from the desert to the south. Where his queen is, we do not know, but he and his followers carry no more than a few days' water to get here. A few of our folk tried to follow the Warden's trail when he first appeared, but they never returned. All I can tell you is that the Warden came once with a shifter who spoke out loud of returning to somewhere called Karak. This creature was soundly beaten by the Warden for his slip."

If the PCs indicate their intent to end the threat from Queen Shephatiah, Lotho puts them up and feeds them free of charge at the caravansary while they prepare for their journey.

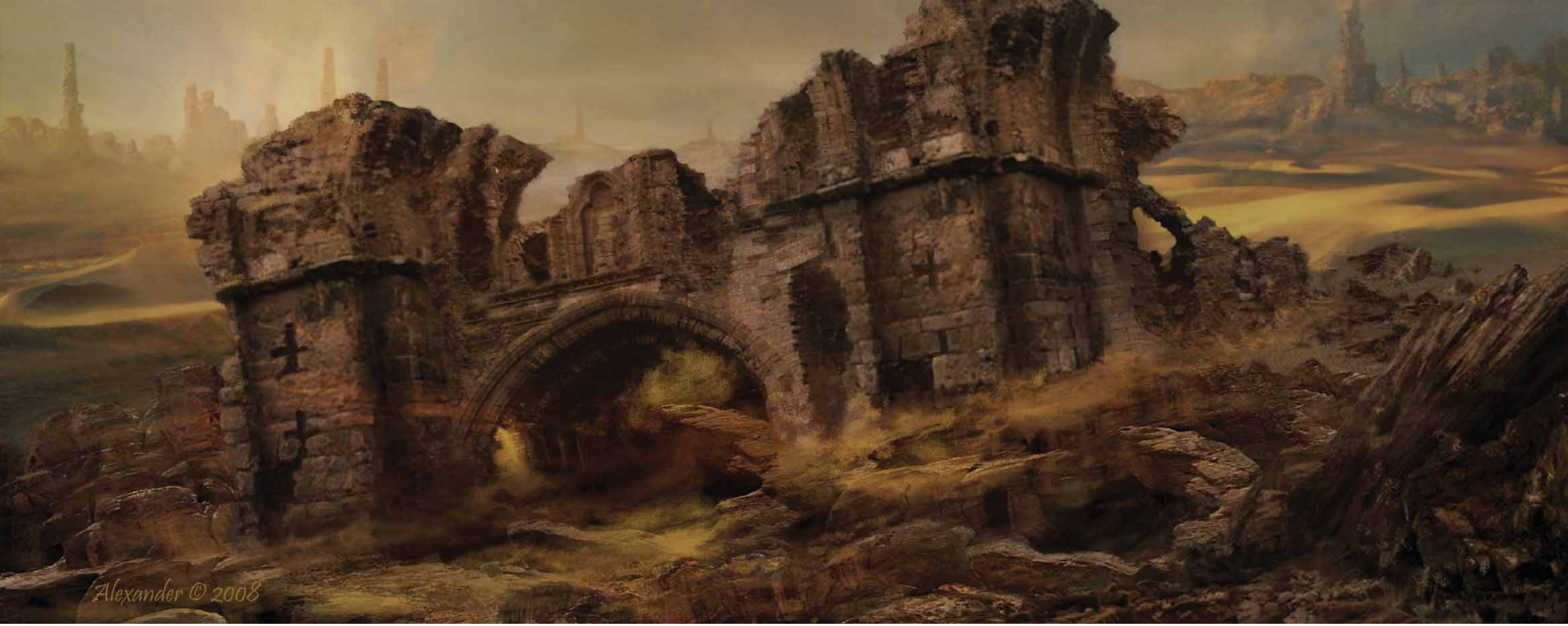
Desert Trek

Setting out from Dunesend, the PCs make their way into the desert. Though the arid sands are inhospitable, their hard-packed dunes make for easier going than the Thornwaste.

As you travel, the intermittent desert landmarks you pass are a perfect match for the course set out by Bram's directions. These are a scattered series of basalt pillars, the remnants of long-ago volcanic eruptions rising now like sentinels from the sand.

On the second day of travel, the PCs are spotted and attacked by a patrol sent out by Queen Shephatiah.

Tactical Encounter: Desert Patrol (page 76).



PART 2: FORTRESS IRONFELL

Deep in the desert three days south of Dunesend, an isolated outcropping of basalt marks the location of the famous Karak Lode. When the members of Clan Ironfell began their excavations here, they constructed a defensible fortress to protect the mines below. Within the rock of the basalt bluff, they carved a multilevel complex whose gatehouse was the only sign of what lay below. From this bastion, the Ironfells controlled the desert for 50 miles in all directions.

As part of the complex's unparalleled security, access from the fortress to the mines was carefully hidden. Only by using special signet rings could the dwarves of the clan access the mines once their secret gate was sealed. In case the fortress ever fell to invaders, the clan created false trails leading off into the desert, creating the appearance that the fortress was simply a stop-over point for shipping ore back to the supply depot.

Approaching the Fortress

The PCs reach Karak the day after the "Desert Patrol" encounter.

Earlier that morning, the course you have been following became a rocky track leading toward another basalt bluff in the distance. However, as the track curves around to its south side, you see two guard towers of hewn stone set into the face of the bluff. Narrow gouges that might be arrow slits flank a narrow track leading directly into the rock. Though worn by long years of sand and wind, the towers are clearly of dwarven construction, standing as strong as the day they were built.

Secret History

Despite what the PCs have been told, the history of the mines of Karak is more complicated than Bram Ironfell would have them believe. Though the mines were rich with deposits of precious metals, the caverns of Karak were tainted by veins of raw elemental energy. These were the physical remnants of powerful magical experiments performed here by the sorcerers of the serpent kingdom that ruled this area millennia ago.

The arcanists of Clan Ironfell determined that the elemental energy of the mines presented no danger. However, though the mines made the clan rich, so too were they the dwarves' undoing. A rift leading directly to the Elemental Chaos was uncovered in the deepest part of Karak, its energy flooding the mines with madness. The dwarves of Ironfell turned on each other, the folk of the supply depot waiting in vain

when an expected shipment of riches from the mines failed to appear. Though expeditions were made in search of Karak, none but the dwarves within knew its location. Eventually, the supply depot was abandoned, and the Karak Lode passed from memory.

Outside the Mines

The fortress guarding the Karak Lode consists of two levels within the basalt bluff, plus a lower level that hides the secret entrance to the mines.

The basalt bluff is 50 feet high and requires a DC 15 Athletics check to climb. From its top, the PCs have a view of the desert for several miles in every direction. Fireplaces and braziers within the complex are vented to chimneys that route through narrow cracks and crevices, making entry from above impossible. However, in the long years since the mine was lost, a collapse on the bluff above has created an entrance into area 9. A flight of harpies lairs here (see the "Courtyard" tactical encounter, page 80), but these creatures raise no alarm at the approach of intruders. They can be spotted atop the bluff with a DC 17 Perception check. If their nest is explored, it contains only the foul remains of the desert creatures on which the harpies feed.

The Fortress

The ancient halls of the Karak lode remain essentially unchanged since the days of the dwarves.

Illumination: Unless otherwise noted, there is no illumination within the fortress.

Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: The interior spaces of the fortress are constructed of close-fitted stone (DC 20 to climb). Ceilings are 20 feet high except as noted.

Portals: Rusted iron portcullises bar the way into the fortress. See individual encounter areas for specific information on raising and lowering the portcullises.

All doors within the complex are of sturdy wood (Strength DC 16 to break open if locked).

Except for the main gates (which are barred), all the doors within the complex, as well as the portcullises, can be opened or activated by the touch of an Ironfell signet ring (a minor action). The curse chanter in the "Foiled Ambush" encounter (page 86) carries an Ironfell signet ring, as does the real Queen Shephatiah (the "Queen's Retinue" encounter, page 92).

Rot and Debris: With the exception of area 19, much of the fortress has been given over to filth and decay. Rubble and the dry-rotted remains of furniture are spread across the floors, and the walls are stained with condensation and mildew. In the year since Karak was reoccupied, Shephatiah's followers have discarded rotten food and other filth in the areas they do not inhabit.

1. Entry Tunnel

A rusted portcullis blocks this long tunnel, with another raised and hidden beyond it. The down portcullis can be raised only from this area, but it cannot be locked in the up position.

Arrow slits and murder holes along the length of the tunnel provide defenders with multiple angles of attack. Anyone looking in through the arrow slits sees shadowy figures beyond (see below or the tactical encounter).

Tactical Encounter: Gatehouse (page 78).

2. West Gatehouse

Sand blown in through the southern arrow slits spreads across the floor. Straw dummies have been erected behind the arrow slits to give the illusion of numerous guardians.

Tactical Encounter: Gatehouse.

3. East Gatehouse

Old weapons racks line the wall of this chamber. The rotting and rusted polearms they once held have been used to arm more straw dummies.

Tactical Encounter: Gatehouse.

4. West Upper Gatehouse

Bones scattered across the floor show where a desert predator once laired in this chamber.

Tactical Encounter: Gatehouse.

5. East Upper Gatehouse

A winch in this chamber once controlled the first portcullis in area 1. However, it is rusted and broken, so that the portcullis cannot be raised from here or locked in the down position.

6. Southern Overlook

This chamber allowed defenders to fire down through murder holes into the entry tunnel, or through arrow slits into the courtyard below. A working winch controls the second portcullis in area 1.

Tactical Encounter: Gatehouse.

7. West Guardhouse

Stone benches and a rusted brazier mark this as a resting place for off-duty gate guards. Access to the northern overlook (area 19) is barred by a portcullis along the passage to the north.

8. East Guardhouse

This chamber is identical to area 7. A portcullis along the passage to the north blocks access to area 19.

9. Courtyard

This vast chamber features an arched ceiling supported by massive carved columns. A portion of the ceiling has collapsed, covering the floor here in wind-blown sand and creating an opening to the top of the basalt bluff.

Tactical Encounter: Courtyard (page 80).

10. Stables and Cart Storage

Dusty bones, rotting wood, and bands of rusted iron are scattered across the floor here. These are the remains of the wide-wheeled wagons once used to haul ore shipments across the desert and the mules that pulled them. A scattering of blue scales show where the behir has made this area its lair.

11. Stable Master's Quarters

This chamber was taken over by the Warden. A rough bed built of scavenged wood sits against one wall, while the gnoll's filthy and foul-smelling gear is strewn across the room.

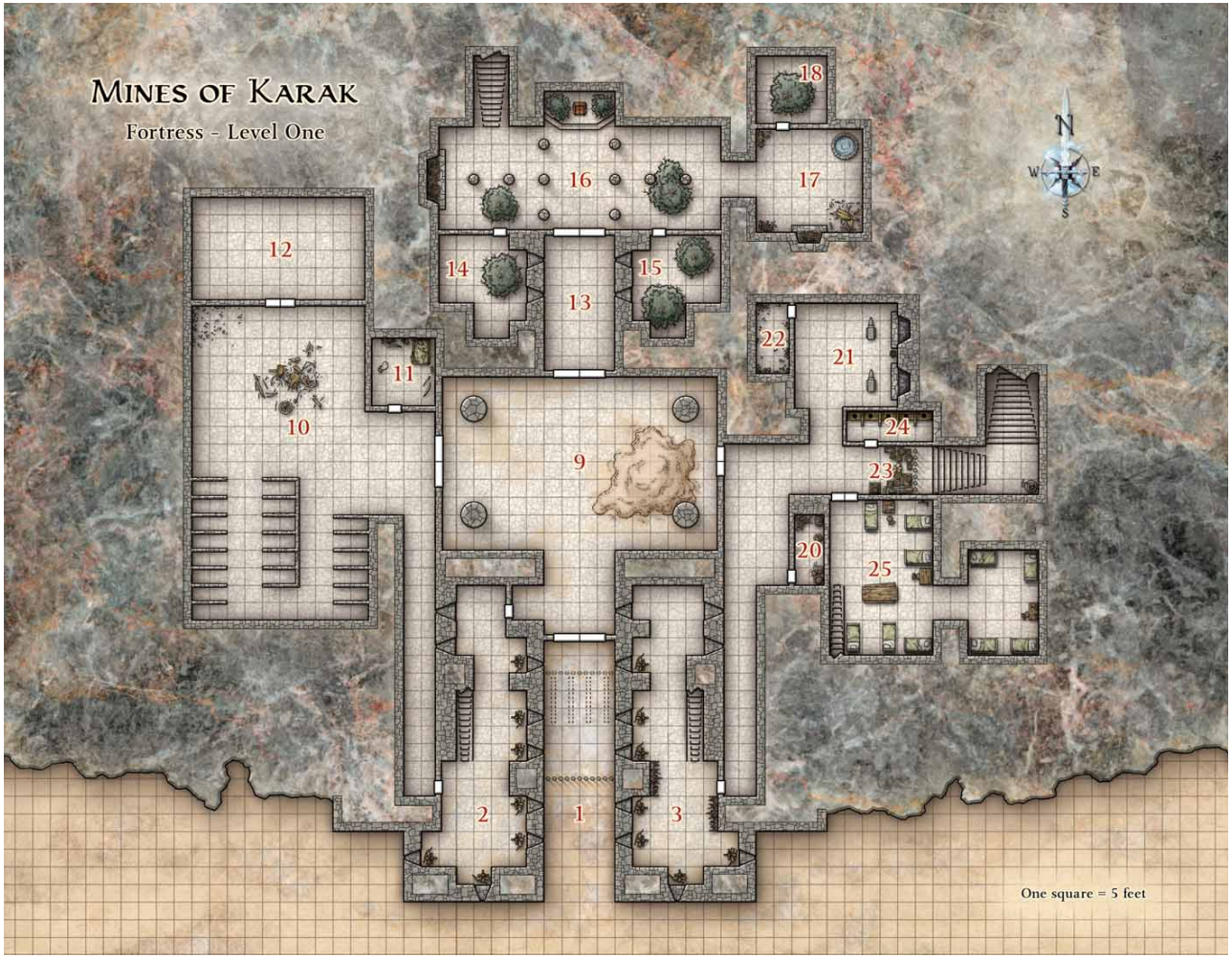
12. Ore Storage

Ore from the mines was stored here and made ready for transport. Though the area is empty, the dust of the floor shows where crates have been moved through here recently (Perception DC 12).

13. Entry Hall

This corridor once guarded entry into the fortress's great hall. Footprints show where numerous creatures have recently passed this way.

Tactical Encounter: Great Hall (page 83).



14. West Guard Post

This former guard chamber is the habitat of a sussur tree growing up from the cracked stone floor. See the tactical encounter for a description.

Tactical Encounter: Great Hall.

15. East Guard Post

Like area 14, this chamber is empty except for a pair of sussur trees growing through the stone of the floor.

Tactical Encounter: Great Hall.

16. Great Hall

The dwarves of Karak once feasted here before the high seat of their mine-thane. This chamber is now the lair of an evil dryad who has raised a grove of sussur trees within it.

Tactical Encounter: Great Hall.

17. Kitchen

This chamber now serves as the den of a pair of cackle-fiend hyenas. An open well accesses a cistern filled with drinkable water.

Tactical Encounter: Great Hall.

18. Larder

A layer of rot and mold surrounds the roots of a lone sussur tree.

Tactical Encounter: Great Hall.

19. Northern Overlook

This defensive position commanded a view of the courtyard below. Along its northern wall were the quarters of the mine-thane, the clan accountant, and the head of the guard, as well as a private latrine. The personal chambers have long since been stripped of any valuables.

As well as being easily defensible, this area is free of the stench and squalor that fills much of the rest of the fortress. It makes a good place for the PCs to take an extended rest.

Tactical Encounter: Foiled Ambush (page 86).

20. Alehouse

This storage area contains only a few dry and splintered kegs.

21. Smithy

Cold forges and dusty anvils show where dwarf smiths repaired and crafted the mine's weapons and tools.

22. Coal Storage

Dusty lumps of anthracite are scattered across the floor here, a pair of rusted shovels set against the wall.

23. Guard Hall

This wide hall blocks access to the fortress's lower level with a portcullis controlled from the barracks. The desert brigands who occupy the fortress have filled this area with supplies taken from caravans they have attacked. A rusted iron statue of a dwarf miner stands on the stairwell landing below.

Tactical Encounter: Guard Hall (page 81).

24. Latrine

This privy contains nothing of interest or use.

Tactical Encounter: Guard Hall.

25. Barracks

The miners, crafters, and guards of the Karak Lode lived in this area, while the smaller side chamber housed shift-captains. Six stone bunks stand here, along with roughly made wooden tables, benches, and chairs.

Tactical Encounter: Guard Hall.

26. Lower Guard Hall

This locked door controlled access to the fortress's lower level.

Tactical Encounter: Guard Hall.

27. Lower Guard Post

When the fortress was occupied, guards here maintained a watch through the arrow slit looking out onto the hall.

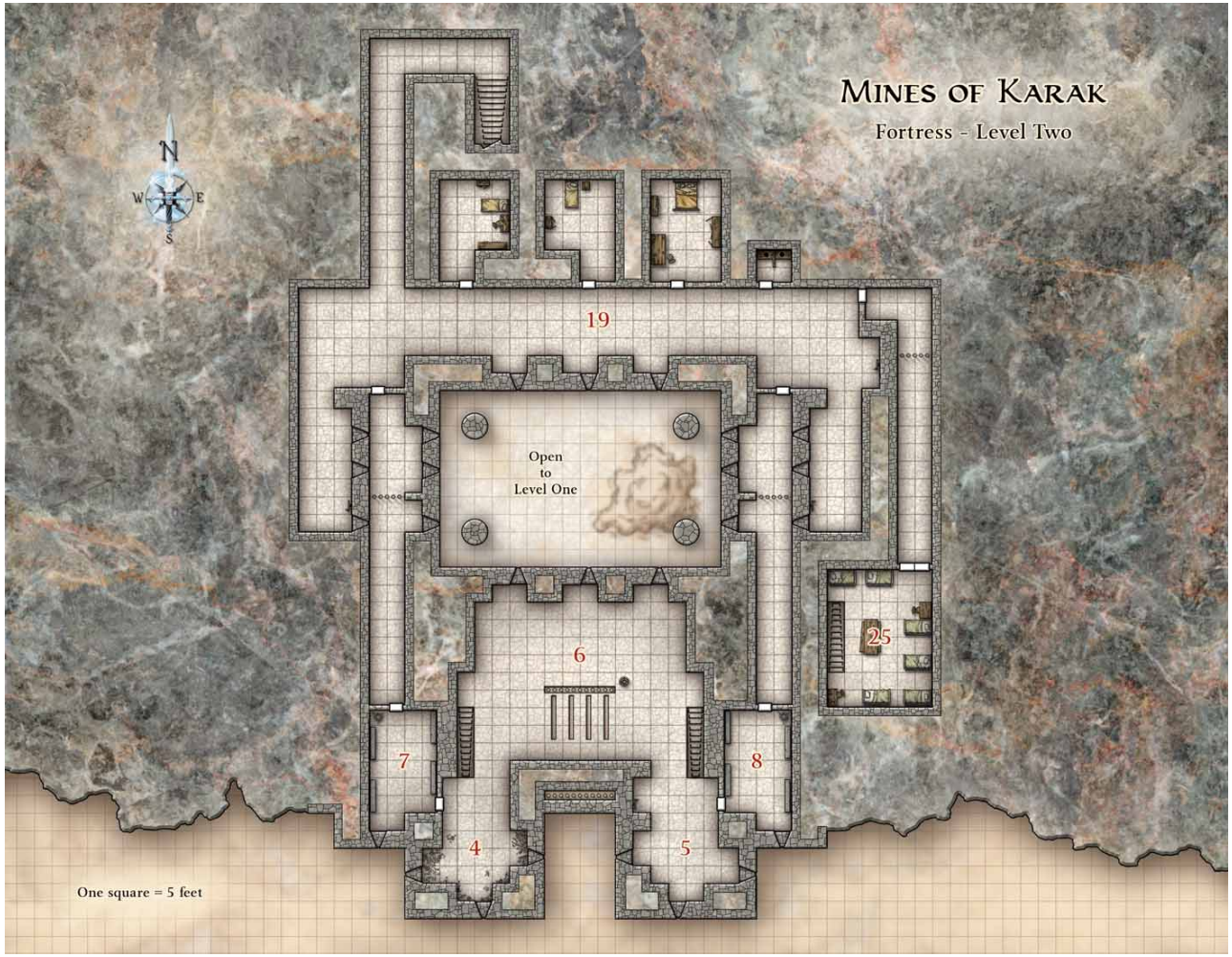
Tactical Encounter: Guard Hall.

28. Guardroom

A squad of guards watched over the empty cells in area 29—actually the secret entrance to the mines below.

29. Dungeon

Four cells with barred portcullis doors are empty except for stone cots and manacles set into the walls. Set within the floor of one of the cells is the only entrance to the Karak Lode, but it cannot be detected from this side as long as it is closed. See the "Foiled Ambush" tactical encounter (page 86) for more information.



30. Storerooms

These chambers once held supplies for the maintenance and upkeep of the fortress. A fine layer of moldy debris is all that remains

31. Crypts

The dwarves of Ironfell interred their dead here. The vaults were half filled (mostly with victims of mining accidents or folk who died in the desert) by the time the mine was abandoned.

Tactical Encounter: Crypts (page 85).

The Birdman

When the PCs first explore area 29, they find one of the cells with a prisoner recently captured by a patrol.

This ancient dungeon shows signs of recent use, with scuff marks along the floor indicating traffic in both directions. Four large cells stand in the center of the chamber, the entrance of each blocked by a lowered portcullis controlled by a nearby winch and pulley. From the darkness ahead comes a bright chirping sound.

The southwest cell is occupied by an aged human male, his lined face sporting a snow-white beard to match his fringe of hair. He wears the garb of a simple desert peasant, and appears to have not been here long. Seven yellow canaries perch on his shoulders and hop around his cell. The Birdman whistles and chirps at his tiny charges. If spoken to, he simply nods and smiles.

The prisoner offers no resistance and allows himself to be led about by the PCs. If any survivors from the fortress are questioned, they state that the Birdman is a simple-minded peasant found wandering the desert not far from Dunesend a few days before. He was captured and brought here to feed the behir.

The Birdman wanders those areas of the fortress already cleared out by the PCs, hiding from any subsequent combat. He accepts food and water if it is offered, smiling if spoken to but otherwise ignoring the party.

The Birdman plays a role in the aftermath of the "Foiled Ambush" encounter (page 86).

Part 3: The Lost Mines of Karak

Beyond the secret portal in the dungeon lies the Karak Lode—now the lair and sanctum of the real Queen Shephatiah and her followers. The Karak mines are a meandering series of tunnels extending deep underground. Karak's abandoned passages are not mapped. They contain nothing of interest and play no part in the adventure.

In the areas the PCs explore, they notice seams of red stone glowing with a dull light. A DC 17 Dungeoneering or Nature check reveals that this is not a known Underdark phenomena. A DC 17 Arcana check identifies the stuff as veins of raw elemental energy that has somehow leached into the natural world.-

1. Mine Entrance

The secret portal in the dungeon (area 29, above) leads to a lift system descending down an 80-foot passage. There, a final portcullis and guardroom are defended by a force of troglodytes. Beyond lies access to the dark caverns of the Karak Lode.

Tactical Encounter: Mine Entrance (page 88).

2. Chaos Mines

In the heart of Karak, this open gallery chamber leads off into a half-dozen shafts under excavation when the mines were lost. A vein of elemental energy passes through the cavern, bolstering the barlgura (Shephatiah's devoted servant) that guards this area with the help of a host of undead and monstrous creatures.

Tactical Encounter: Chaos Mines (page 90).

3. Queen's Retinue

This deep cavern is the lair of Shephatiah, and the place where the Queen of the Drylands and her followers make a final stand. A rift to the Elemental Chaos lies at the bottom of a deep chasm here—the source of the deadly energy that flooded the mines and destroyed Clan Ironfell.

Tactical Encounter: Queen's Retinue (page 92).

Conclusion

In the "Queen's Retinue" encounter, the PCs discover how Shephatiah reopened the Karak Lode, and that the naga works for unseen masters to whom the mine's output is being shipped by way of the elemental rift.

If the PCs return to Dunesend, they are welcomed as heroes. The folk of the village provide food and supplies for the party's return trip to Overlook.

Once back in the mountain city, the PCs can relay their findings to Bram Ironfell. The dwarf is disheartened by the news, and he tells the PCs that he will leave the mines closed in order to prevent others from suffering the fate of his clanfolk who perished there. However, though Bram promises to seal off the mines, the forces controlling Shephatiah have a long reach and dark plans. Though neither the dwarf nor the PCs know it yet, they are all caught up in a dark plot whose full extents have yet to be revealed.

Clan Rivals

Encounter Level 6 (1,250 XP)

Setup

3 dwarf hammerers (D)
2 dwarf bolters (B)
1 hell hound (D)

As the PCs make their way across the Thornwaste, they discover that dwarves of the rival Hammerfist Clan have caught wind of their expedition and seek to steal the secret directions to the lost mines.

This ambush occurs after the party's fourth success or second failure in the "Through the Thornwaste" skill challenge (page 61). The area the PCs pass through is thick with thorn brambles and studded with outcroppings of rock. The dwarves attack at dawn or sunset, depending on whether the PCs are traveling by day or night.

The PCs begin the encounter with their miniatures along the northern edge of the tactical map. The two dwarf hammerers are hiding in the brambles with total concealment, while the other creatures in the encounter are behind boulders and out of line of sight.

If the PCs spot the dwarf hammerers, read:

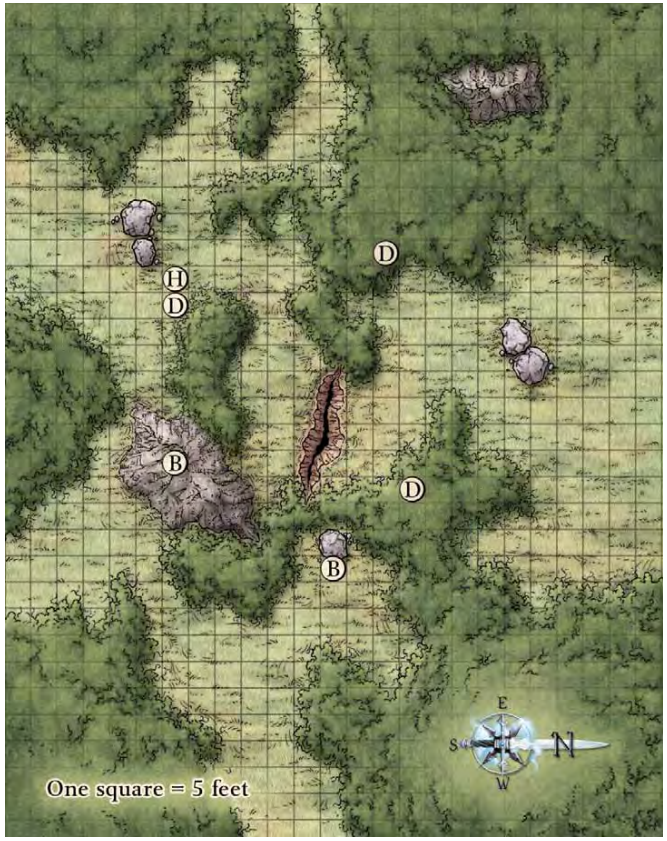
Hidden within the brambles, two dwarves lie in wait, warhammers in hand.

If the bolters are spotted, or when the PCs approach the ravine, read:

Over the crest of a large outcropping just beyond a ravine ahead, a crossbow appears, trained on your group. A scuffling to the east reveals another dwarf bolter rising from behind a hedge of screening brambles.

Show the dwarf bolters when they appear, but do not place the miniatures for the hammerers and the hell hound unless they are spotted or until they attack.

3 Dwarf Hammerers	**Level 5 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200
Initiative +4	**Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 64; **Bloodied** 32	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 17	
Saving Throws +5 against poison effects	
Speed 5	
Warhammer (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+11 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.	
Shield Bash (minor; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞)	
+9 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 3 damage, and the target is knocked prone or pushed 1 square (dwarf hammerer's choice).	
Throwing Hammer (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 5/10; +10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.	
Stubborn (immediate interrupt, when an enemy tries to push the dwarf or knock it prone; at-will)	
The hammerer makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.	
Stand Your Ground	
When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Dungeoneering +11, Endurance +5	
Str 17 (+5)	**Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, warhammer, 3 throwing hammers	



2 Dwarf Bolters	Level 4 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14	
Saving Throws +5 against poison effects	
Speed 5	
(+) **Warhammer** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 1d10 + 2 damage.	
Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 15/30; +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.	
Aimed Shot	
The dwarf bolter gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and deals an extra 1d6 damage with ranged attacks against creatures that don't have cover.	
Stand Your Ground	
When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Dungeoneering +10, Endurance +7	
Str 14 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow with 20 bolts	

Hell Hound	Level 7 Brute
Medium elemental beast (fire)	XP 300
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +11
Fire Shield (Fire) aura 1; any creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura takes 1d6 fire damage.	
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18	
Resist 20 fire	
Speed 7	
(+) **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**	
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 plus 1d8 fire damage.	
Fiery Breath (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚅ ⚃) ✦ **Fire**	
Close blast 3; +9 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 fire damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 14 (+5)	**Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+3)

Tactics

The bolters open fire while the hammerers charge forward in an attempt to force the PCs into the ravine. If the PCs attempt to cross the ravine, the third hammerer releases the hell hound to charge them, then follows quickly behind.

The hell hound tries to catch any PCs in the ravine in its fiery breath while the hammerer attacks anyone trying to climb out.

The dwarves are sure of their combat superiority. They and their hell hound fight to the death.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light.

Thorn Brambles: These thick, thorny brambles grow to a height of 8 feet and are difficult terrain. Within the brambles, adjacent creatures have concealment, while creatures not adjacent have total concealment.

Boulders: These 5-foot-high rocks provide cover. A boulder can be climbed with a DC 10 Athletics check. A creature on top of a boulder reduces concealment for creatures in the brambles within 4 squares of it, from full concealment to concealment, or from concealment to none.

Rock Outcropping: These outcroppings of basalt stand 20 feet high and can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check. Creatures on top of an outcropping have superior cover against creatures below.

Ravine: This ravine is 10 feet deep with steep, crumbling sides. A creature in the ravine has cover against all creatures not adjacent to the edge. Scaling the sides of the ravine requires a DC 15 Athletics check.

Treasure: In addition to any treasure you place here (see "Treasure Parcels," page 59), one of the dwarves bears a fist-and-hammer crest on the side of his warhammer. A DC 15 History check (DC 10 for a resident of Elsir Vale) recognizes the crest as that of Hammerfist, a clan of local dwarves that have long been bitter rivals of the Ironfells.

One of the dwarves also carries a journal hinting at his clan's hunger to claim the lost Karak Lode in defiance of Clan Ironfell. This journal makes note of "the secret route to the mine" being discovered months before, but makes no mention of who did so.

THE WARDEN

Encounter Level 8 (1,750 XP)

SETUP

The Warden, gnoll demonic scourge (G)
1 behir (B)
3 satyr rakes (R)
12 villagers (V)

The PCs' arrival in Dunesend comes at a critical moment. Believing that the villagers are holding out on tribute of crops and livestock to Queen Shephatiah, the Warden has decided to teach them a deadly lesson. In addition to his behir, the Warden has a trio of satyr rakes patrolling the perimeter of the village. The satyrs are hidden as the PCs approach.

Perception Check
DC 12: *A rustling in the thorny bracken reveals the presence of a creature ahead.*
DC 17: *You catch a glimpse of a bearded face, its forehead marked with goat's horns. It snarls as it turns and races away to the south, quickly disappearing within the briars.*

As the PCs enter Dunesend, read:

You crest a low rise to see the expanse of thorns suddenly end, a great sea of sand beyond it. At the transition from the Thornwaste to the desert, a decrepit village sprawls, its huts and fields spreading to either side of an ancient stone tower. A sudden cry of pain drifts toward you on the wind.

As the PCs approach, read:

In the center of the settlement, sun-darkened human villagers observe in angry silence as a massive gnoll raises a blood-flecked flail over its head. At its feet, a human male lies dead. Behind the gnoll coils a serpentine creature with glittering blue scales and dozens of legs. It watches the villagers hungrily.

The satyrs remain hidden in the briars off the map until the PCs make a move. (They are loyal to Shephatiah but not anxious to get in the Warden's way.) Do not place their miniatures unless they are spotted or attack.

The Warden, Level 8 Brute (Leader) Gnoll Demonic Scourge
Medium natural humanoid XP 350

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
Leader of the Pack aura 5; allies in the aura gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls. While this creature is bloodied, the bonus increases to +2.
HP 106; **Bloodied** 53
AC 20; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18
Speed 5
⨁ **Heavy Flail** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, or 2d6 + 7 while bloodied; against a bloodied enemy, this attack also knocks the target prone; see also *pack attack*.
Bloodthirst
If the gnoll demonic scourge bloodies an enemy with a melee attack, an ally adjacent to the enemy can make a melee attack against that enemy as an immediate reaction.
Overwhelming Attack (free; encounter)
The gnoll demonic scourge applies its *bloodthirst* power to two allies instead of one.
Pack Attack
The gnoll demonic scourge deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the demonic scourge's allies adjacent to it.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Insight +10, Intimidate +13, Religion +10
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 15 (+6)
Equipment hide armor, heavy flail

Juvenile Behir Thunderlance Level 10 Artillery
Large natural magical beast (reptile) XP 500

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +7, darkvision
HP 87; **Bloodied** 43
AC 22; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22
Resist 15 lightning
Speed 8, climb 4
⨁ Bite (standard; at-will)
+17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.
Lightning Breath (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃ ⚂) ✦ **Lightning**
Area blast 1 within 10; +15 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 5 lightning damage, and all creatures adjacent to the target take 5 lightning damage. *Miss:* Half damage.
Thunder Lance (standard; encounter) ✦ **Lightning**
The behir thunderlance sends a spear of crackling electricity from its mouth. The behir thunderlance targets up to two creatures with its thunder lance; the first target must be within 10 squares of the behir, and the second target must be within 10 squares of the first; +15 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 5 lightning damage, and the target is pushed 2 and knocked prone.
Devour (standard; sustain minor; recharge when no creature is affected by this power)
+19 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 4 damage and the target is grabbed (until escape). While grabbed, the grabbed creature is pulled into the behir's space, is restrained, and can only target the behir. The behir thunderlance can sustain the power as a minor action, dealing 10 damage and maintaining the grab. After escaping, the target is placed in any square adjacent to the behir.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +14
Str 19 (+9) **Dex** 13 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+7)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 7 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+6)

3 Satyr Rakes	Level 7 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid	XP 300
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40	
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19	
Speed 6	
Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.	
Shortbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 15/30; +12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.	
Feint (move; at-will)	
+10 vs. Reflex; the satyr rake gains combat advantage against the target (see below).	
Harrying Attack (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**	
The satyr rake makes a basic attack, shifts 3 squares, and makes another basic attack.	
Combat Advantage	
The satyr rake deals an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Bluff +12, Nature +9, Stealth +12	
Str 12 (+4)	**Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 18 (+7)
Equipment leather armor, short sword, shortbow, quiver of 30 arrows	

Tactics

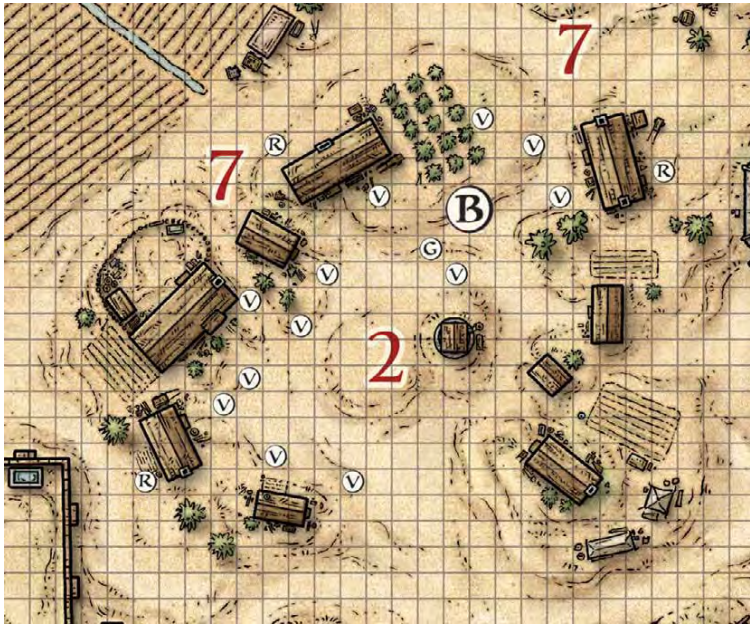
The Warden and the behir turn their attention to the PCs as soon as they are spotted. The villagers flee for cover and do not return until the battle is over.

The Warden wades into melee with his heavy flail against the most powerful looking combatants. Once the banshrae and satyrs arrive, he stays close to them to maximize the effect of his *bloodthirst* and *pack attack* powers.

The behir stays at the edge of melee to make breath weapon attacks against spellcasters and ranged combatants. While waiting for its breath weapon to recharge, it makes bite attacks against the closest foes.

The satyrs make their first attacks with superior cover from behind the northernmost houses. The rakes make shortbow attacks against lightly armored PCs until they are pressed into melee. They then draw short swords, fighting close to the warden to take advantage of his *bloodthirst* and *pack attack* powers.

The Warden and his behir fight to the death. The satyrs are strictly hired help, and they flee if the Warden and the behir are both killed.



Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light (sunlight by day; lanterns hanging on the adjacent buildings at night).

Wooden Huts: The huts of the villagers are crudely constructed of mud and bramblewood thatch. A hut can be climbed with a DC 10 Athletics check. A creature on the roof of a hut has cover against creatures on the ground. The wall of a hut can be broken through with a DC 13 Strength check. A hut provides superior cover to anyone inside it.

Stone Tower: The stone walls of this three-story dwarf-built tower still stand strong, though its wooden interior floors have long since rotted away. It has no door, but creatures within the open doorway gain cover against those outside.

Covered Well: The low stone wall that surrounds this well provides cover to anyone behind it. Its wooden roof is supported on stanchions 8 feet above the ground. The well is 60 feet deep and holds 10 feet of cool, fresh water.

Desert Patrol

Encounter Level 6 (1,200 XP)

Setup

1 howling hag (H)
3 razorclaw stalkers (R)

As they make their way across the desert, the PCs are harried by one of Queen Shephatiah's patrols. As the PCs approach from the north, the razorclaw stalkers spot their dust from behind the cover of the dune ridge.

The razorclaws cover themselves with cloaks and a layer of sand that grants them total concealment. Do not place their miniatures unless they are spotted or until the PCs attack. The howling hag's miniature should reflect her human form.

As the PCs enter the area, read:

Ahead, a figure emerges from a haze of wind-blown sand. The emaciated form of an elderly human female crawls toward you on hands and knees, her face lined and sunburned beneath the hood of a ragged cloak. Her voice raised against the wind, she calls out: "Turn back! Nothing but death awaits you in the heart of the desert!"

Perception Check
DC 22: *A cloaked form lies on the ground a short distance behind the old woman, all but invisible beneath a thin layer of sand.*

The PCs have a chance to spot the closest razorclaw stalker, but the rest are out of line of sight on the other side of the dune ridge.

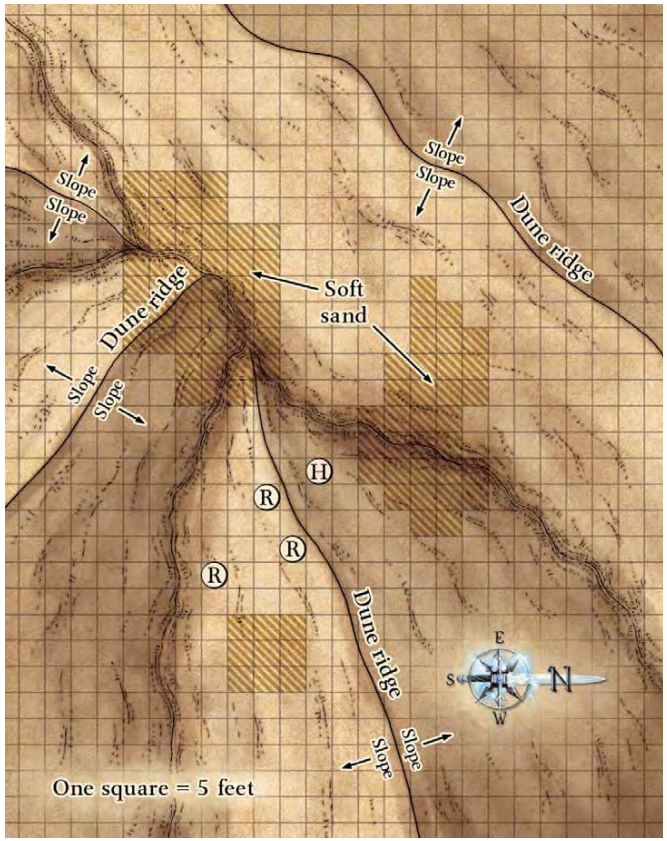
When the PCs first see a razorclaw stalker, read:

A bestial humanoid suddenly rises from the ground, the layer of sand that concealed it streaming down its mottled brown cloak. It wields a razor-sharp short sword, snarling as it attacks.

When the PCs see the hag in her true form, read:

The old woman's form shimmers like heat haze. In her place stands a wizened hag, pointed teeth bared in a hideous smile as she laughs.

Howling Hag	**Level 7 Controller**
Medium fey humanoid	XP 300
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +10; low-light vision
Baleful Whispers (**Psychic**) aura 5; an enemy that ends its turn in the aura takes 1d6 psychic damage.	
HP 83; **Bloodied** 41; see also *shriek of pain*	
AC 21; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18	
Resist 10 thunder	
Speed 6; see also *fey step*	
(+) **Quarterstaff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon** +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.	
⇙ **Howl** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Thunder** Close blast 5; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.	
⇙ **Shriek of Pain** (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Thunder** Close blast 5; +8 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 4 thunder damage, or 3d6 + 9 thunder damage if the howling hag is bloodied. *Miss:* Half damage.	
Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph** A howling hag can alter its physical form to appear as an old crone of any Medium humanoid race (*MM* 280).	
Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation** The howling hag can teleport 10 squares.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Bluff +11, Insight +10, Intimidate +11, Nature +10	
Str 18 (+7)	**Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 19 (+7)	**Int** 12 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+6)
Equipment quarterstaff	



3 Razorclaw Stalkers	Level 7 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, shifter	XP 300
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 79; **Bloodied** 39	
AC 21; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18; see also *razorclaw shifting*	
Speed 6; see also *razorclaw shifting*	
(+) **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage; see also *skirmish*.	
↓ **Short Sword Riposte** (free, when an enemy makes an opportunity attack against the razorclaw stalker; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
The razorclaw stalker makes a short sword attack against the enemy.	
Skirmish +1d6	
If, on its turn, the razorclaw stalker ends its move at least 4 squares away from its starting point, it deals an extra 1d6 damage on its attacks until the start of its next turn.	
Razorclaw Shifting (minor, usable only while bloodied; encounter)	
Until the end of the encounter or until rendered unconscious, the razorclaw stalker gains +2 speed and a +1 bonus to AC and Reflex defense.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +12, Stealth +12, Streetwise +8	
Str 18 (+7)	**Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 12 (+4) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, short sword	

Tactics

The howling hag in crone form attempts to lure the PCs toward her through the soft sand. With a successful Insight check made against her Bluff check (+11), a PC senses that all is not as it appears. As soon as two or more PCs come within 5 squares of her (or if she is attacked at once), the hag unleashes her *shriek of pain* and uses *fey step* to teleport to the south side of the dune ridge. She then changes into her natural form, using *howl* to push PCs into areas of soft sand and staying out of melee with *fey step*.

The razorclaw stalkers hold their positions until the PCs cross over the dune ridge in pursuit of the howling hag. They then rise from hiding and attack. They stay in constant motion to make use of their *skirmish* power, while trusting their *short sword riposte* to turn opportunity attacks against their foes.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light by day; dim light at night.

Sand Dunes: The hard-packed sand in this area rises and falls in sweeping dunes. The direction of each dune's slope is indicated on the map. The upward slope of a dune is difficult terrain, but moving along the downward slope incurs no penalty. Creatures on opposite sides of a dune slope have cover against each other.

Soft Sand: These patches of deep shifting sand are difficult terrain. Additionally, movement through soft sand requires a DC 17 Acrobatics or Athletics check. On a failed check, a creature is restrained as its movement stops and it sinks up to its knees.

With a DC 20 Nature check, a creature recognizes all the squares of soft sand adjacent to it. (Seeing a creature sink in soft sand automatically warns other creatures of the effect in that square.) The razorclaw stalkers and the howling hag know the location of all patches of soft sand in the area.

GATEHOUSE

Encounter Level 7 (1,450 XP)

SETUP

1 troglodyte curse chanter (C)
2 troglodyte impalers (I)
2 troglodyte maulers (M)

This encounter takes place in areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the fortress map.

Troglodyte Curse Chanter	**Level 8 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid (reptile)	XP 350
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
Troglodyte Stench aura 1; living enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.	
HP 93; **Bloodied** 46	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 22	
Speed 5	
⊕ **Quarterstaff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.	
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
+10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 2 damage.	
↗ **Poison Ray** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**	
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 5 poison damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).	
↗ **Cavern Curse** (standard; recharge ⚀ ⚁ ⚂ ⚃) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Ranged 5; +11 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and is slowed (save ends both).	
✧ **Tunnel Grace** (minor 1/round; recharge ⚁ ⚂ ⚃)	
Close burst 10; all allies in the burst gain +5 speed until the end of the troglodyte shaman's next turn.	
✧ **Chant of Renewal** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Healing**	
Close burst 5; bloodied allies in the burst regain 15 hit points.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Draconic
Skills Dungeoneering +13, Endurance +14, Religion +9	
Str 15 (+6)	**Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 18 (+8)
Con 21 (+9)	**Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+6)
Equipment robes, quarterstaff, skull mask	

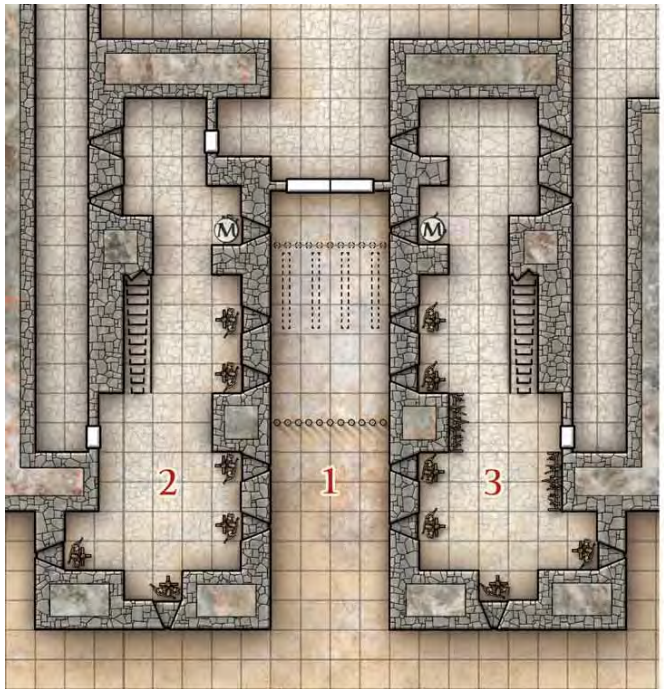
Queen Shephatiah has placed a group of troglodytes on guard at the entrance to the fortress. After several months with no sign of anyone even approaching Karak (never mind attacking), their attention to duty has grown lax.

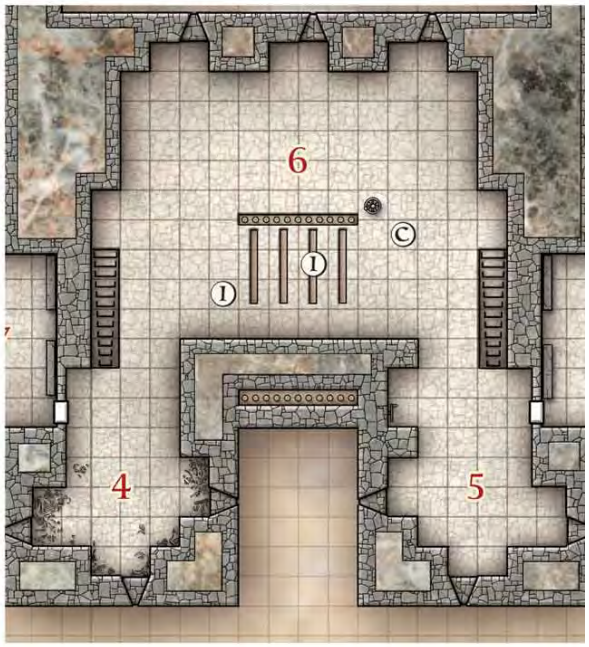
The troglodytes have placed straw dummies in front of the arrow slits facing the entrance hall, hoping to create the appearance that the fortress is well guarded or haunted. This facade is also designed to distract intruders' attention from the portcullis trap the troglodytes have prepared.

When the PCs enter this area, read:

The darkened entry corridor extends inward between rows of arrow slits. At the far end, a massive stone gate banded with iron stands closed. Halfway along the corridor, a rusty portcullis blocks further movement. The sand that has drifted in to cover the corridor floor is well marked by recent footprints and signs of heavy objects being dragged.

Perception Check
DC 7: *Dark figures loom on the other side of the closest arrow slits, silently watching you. A foul odor comes from beyond.*
DC 12 (automatic if a light source is introduced into the arrow slit): *The unmoving figure is a crudely made straw dummy, an old dwarven helm on its head and an ancient polearm lashed to it with rope.*
DC 17: *The shadows of the corridor ceiling conceal a deep groove 10 feet before the stone door. Spikes can be seen within, another portcullis there, ready to be dropped.*





2 Troglodyte Impalers	Level 7 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (reptile)	XP 300
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +9; darkvision	
Troglodyte Stench aura 1; living enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.	
HP 69; **Bloodied** 34	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18	
Speed 5	
⨺ **Spear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.	
⨺ **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
+9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage.	
➳ **Javelin** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.	
➳ **Impaling Shot** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃ ⚂) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires javelin; ranged 10; +12 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage, and the troglodyte impaler makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +10 vs. Fortitude; the target is restrained (save ends).	
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Draconic	
Skills Athletics +12, Endurance +13	
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)	
Con 21 (+8) **Int** 7 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+2)	
Equipment spear, quiver of 6 javelins	

Tactics

As long as the troglodytes remain behind arrow slits and murder holes, the PCs are unaffected by their stench.

If possible, the troglodytes wait until two or more PCs have reached the gates before springing their trap. At that point, the curse chanter releases the northern portcullis with a minor action, locking it in place. It then attacks PCs south of the portcullis with *poison ray* and *cavern curse*, targeting them through one of the murder holes in the floor.

The troglodyte impalers fling javelins through the murder holes against targets south of the portcullis, using their *impaling shot* as often as possible.

2 Troglodyte Maulers	Level 6 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (reptile)	XP 250
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision	
Troglodyte Stench aura 1; living enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.	
HP 74; **Bloodied** 37	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19	
Speed 5	
⨺ **Greatclub** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the troglodyte mauler's next turn.	
⨺ **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
+10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage.	
⨺ **Bite** (minor 1/round; at-will)	
Requires combat advantage; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 damage, and until the end of the troglodyte mauler's next turn, healing on the target restores only half the total amount.	
➳ **Javelin** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Draconic	
Skills Athletics +12, Endurance +12	
Str 18 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+5)	
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 6 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+2)	
Equipment greatclub, 2 javelins	

The troglodyte maulers target PCs trapped north of the portcullis, hurling javelins through the arrow slits.

All the creatures here are content to snipe at the PCs from behind cover. If the PCs break through the gates, all the troglodytes rush to the first level. They attempt to keep the PCs in the corridor as they fight to the death.

Features of the Area

Illumination: During the day, the entrance corridor is filled with bright light for 10 squares, while sunlight through the southern arrow slits fills both gatehouses with dim light. The rest of this area is dark.

Ceiling: 20 feet high.

Stone Gates: The stone gates are closed and barred from within with rough timbers (Strength DC 18 to break through).

Rusted Portcullises: The southern portcullis is down but its winch (on the second level of this area) is damaged. It cannot be locked in place (up or down), and can be lifted with a DC 15 Strength check.

If the northern portcullis is dropped from above by the troglodyte impalers, it can be locked in place, requiring a DC 23 Strength check to raise or break through.

A character at the winch on the second level can lower the northern portcullis as a minor action, or can raise it with two move actions and a DC 10 Strength check. The portcullis can also be raised or lowered in 1 round by anyone bearing an Ironfell signet ring that is touched to the bars or the winch (a minor action).

Arrow Slits and Murder Holes: These apertures provide superior cover to creatures on either side of them. However, they allow attacks to be made only in the two squares adjacent to them. A creature standing in a square adjacent to the wall 5 feet or more from an arrow slit cannot be seen by anyone on the other side. Creatures on the second level more than 5 feet from a murder hole cannot be seen by creatures below.

COURTYARD

Encounter Level 6 (1,300 XP)

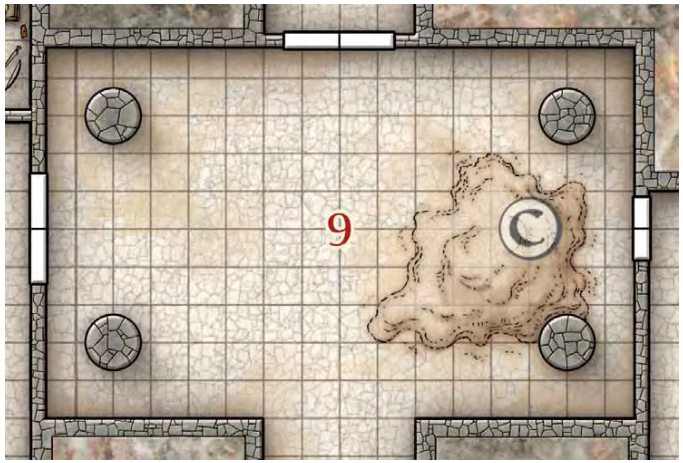
Setup

1 carrion crawler (C)
4 harpies

The carrion crawler lairs out of sight beneath the great sand pile that has collected beneath the hole in the ceiling. The harpies begin the encounter in their lair on the bluff above the hole, out of line of sight from below. Do not place the monsters' miniatures unless they are spotted or until they attack.

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

The ceiling of this huge pillared chamber has collapsed, a great pile of sand collecting near the east wall. Three sets of doors exit this area, arrow slits lining the walls high above.



Carrion Crawler	**Level 7 Controller**
Large aberrant beast	XP 300
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +5; darkvision
HP 81; **Bloodied** 40	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)	
(+) **Tentacles** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**	
Reach 2; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d4 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison and is slowed (save ends both). *First Failed Save:* The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Save:* The target is stunned instead of immobilized (save ends). Saving throws made against the carrion crawler's paralytic tentacles take a -2 penalty.	
Bite (standard; at-will)	
+12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 20 (+8)	**Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 17 (+6)	**Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 16 (+6)

Perception Check
DC 25: *Within the sand pile, something is stirring.*

The carrion crawler bursts from the sand pile when the first PC passes the midpoint of the room.

Tactics

The carrion crawler makes tentacle attacks against any PCs within reach, focusing on targets previously immobilized or stunned.

The harpies fly down in the second round, using their *alluring song* to pull PCs into melee with the carrion crawler. The crawler has gained immunity to their *alluring song* but takes damage from their *deadly screech*.

If two harpies are killed, the survivors flee through the hole in the ceiling once both are bloodied. The carrion crawler fights to the death.

4 Harpies	**Level 6 Controller**
Medium fey humanoid	XP 250
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +5
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19	
Resist 10 thunder	
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy)	
(+) **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.	
Alluring Song (standard; sustain minor; at-will) ✦ **Charm**	
Close burst 10; deafened creatures are immune; +12 vs. Will; the target is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends). When the harpy sustains the power, any target that has not yet saved against the effect is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends).	
Deadly Screech (standard; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) ✦ **Thunder**	
Close burst 4; +12 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +10	
Str 15 (+5)	**Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 19 (+7)

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light by day; dark at night.

Ceiling: 40 feet high. The hole rises through 10 feet of rough rock to the top of the bluff beyond.

Pillars: These provide cover and can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

Sand Pile: This pile of wind-blown sand stands 10 feet high and is difficult terrain. It takes a DC 12 Acrobatics or Athletics check to move through the area of the sand pile.

Guard Hall

Encounter Level 5 (1,125 XP)

Setup

2 longtooth hunters (L)
1 iron cobra guardian (I)
5 human lackeys (H)

This encounter takes place in areas 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27 of the fortress map.

The guards stationed here are charged with preventing access to the lower level. The portcullis is always down and locked. One human lackey pulls watch duty in the hallway while the others eat or sleep in the barracks. The longtooth hunters maintain a post down below. Do not place the other lackeys, the longtooth hunters, or the iron cobra unless they are spotted or until they attack.

When the PCs can see into the first section of corridor, read:

The corridor ahead is stacked high with boxes, barrels, and crates. Beyond them, a lowered portcullis blocks access to a wide stairway leading down. A single human male, his face and cloak tanned by the sun, stands guard here.

When the PCs have a good view of the stairwell, read:

Halfway down the stairs is a landing upon which stands a rusted iron statue of a dwarf, an upraised pickaxe in one hand and a smith's hammer in the other. Around its waist is a gleaming steel belt.

2 Longtooth Hunters **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, shifter XP 250
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16
Speed 5
(+) **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the longtooth hunter's next turn.
Hamstring (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
The longtooth hunter makes a longsword attack. If the attack hits, it makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +9 vs. Reflex; the target is slowed (save ends).
Follow Quarry (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy shifts; at-will)
The longtooth hunter shifts toward the enemy.
Longtooth Shifting (minor, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
Until the end of the encounter or until rendered unconscious, the longtooth hunter gains a +2 bonus to damage rolls. In addition, for as long as it is bloodied, the longtooth hunter gains regeneration 2.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +14, Endurance +11, Nature +9
Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 9 (+2)
Equipment chainmail, light shield, longsword

The statue's ornate steel belt is actually an iron cobra charged with guarding this area.

Perception Check
DC 17: *What appeared to be a steel belt is some sort of creature or construct, moving slowly as you approach.*

The iron cobra maintains its position as part of the stairwell sculpture until the PCs enter its guarded area (see the statistics block).

Tactics

The human lackey on guard shouts out as soon as he sees the PCs. The others emerge from the barracks

Iron Cobra Guardian **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 250
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
HP 75; **Bloodied** 37
AC 20; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17
Immune disease, poison
Speed 7; see also *slithering shift*
(+) **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).
Poison the Mind (standard; recharge ⚁ ⚂ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; only affects creatures taking ongoing poison damage; +8 vs. Will; the target is dazed and slowed (save ends both); see also *guard area*.
Guard Area
The iron cobra has been attuned to guard the landing of the stairwell, as well as the first 2 squares up and down the adjacent stairs. It defends this area with its life. The iron cobra can use its *poison the mind* power against any creature in its guarded area, even if the power hasn't recharged and even if the target isn't taking ongoing poison damage.
Slithering Shift (move; at-will)
The iron cobra shifts 3 squares as a move action.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +10
Str 17 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 19 (+7) **Int** 5 (+0) **Cha** 12 (+4)

5 Human Lackeys **Level 7 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 75
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15; see also *mob rule*
Speed 6
(+) **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 6 damage.
Mob Rule
The human lackey gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while at least two other human lackeys are within 5 squares of it.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 11 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+4)
Equipment leather armor, club

1 round later (or 1 round after they hear any sound of combat in the corridor). The lackeys fight in close proximity to take advantage of their *mob rule* power, flanking for combat advantage if possible.

At any sound of combat from above, the longtooth hunters move onto the stairs and wait for the PCs to come through the portcullis. They open with *hamstring* attacks, then flank with their longswords. Once bloodied, they use *longtooth shifting* to stay in the fight.

The iron cobra attacks any PCs that enter its guarded area, using *poison the mind* as often as possible.

Development

If any of these guards are captured and interrogated, they reveal what they know of the complex in exchange for their freedom. However, their knowledge is incomplete. They believe that Queen Shephatiah is an eladrin who lairs in the great hall, and they know nothing of the mines below the fortress. See area 16 (page 68) and the "Great Hall" encounter (page 83) for more information.

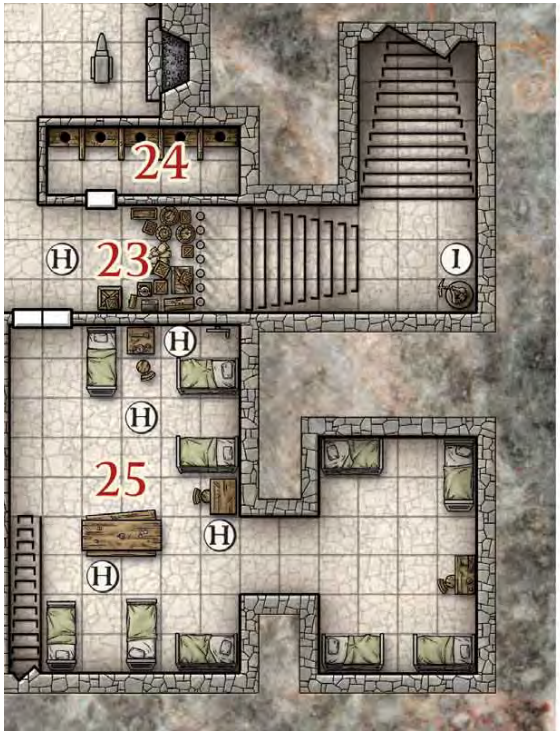
Features of the Area

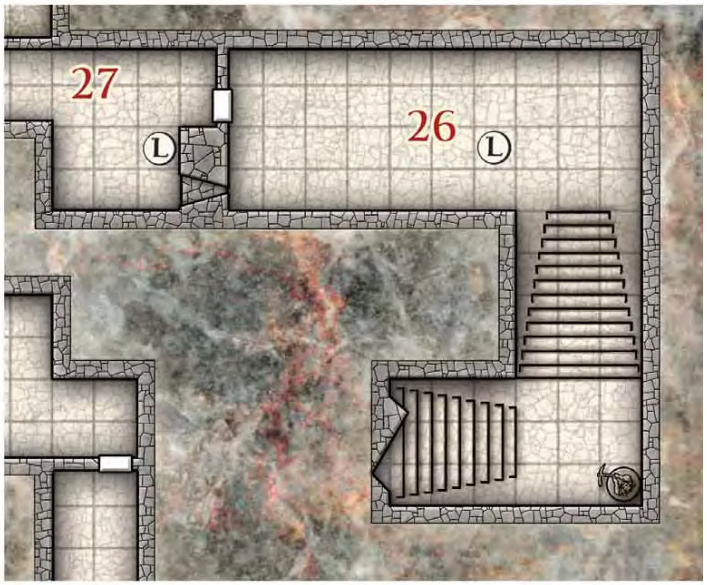
Illumination: Lanterns shed bright light in the barracks, the upper corridor, and the lower guard post. Dim light on the stairs and the landing.

Ceiling: 20 feet high.

Crates and Boxes: These low stacks of crates and boxes provide cover and are difficult terrain. They hold rations stolen from Dunesend and a handful of caravans attacked by Queen Shephatiah's raiders.

Rusted Portcullis: The portcullis is locked in place, requiring a DC 23 Strength check to raise or break through. A character at the winch in the barracks can raise the portcullis with two move actions and a DC 10 Strength check, or can lower it as a minor action. The portcullis can also be raised or lowered in 1 round by anyone bearing an Ironfell signet ring that is touched to the bars or the winch (a minor action).





Barracks: This area housed the miners, crafters, and guards of the Karak Lode, while the smaller side chamber housed shift-captains. The stairs lead up to another barracks that is not part of this encounter area.

Bunks: These triple-deck stone bunks are anchored to floor and ceiling. A few are in use by the guards, and are covered by rough mattresses and threadbare blankets. The side chamber holds double bunks of similar construction, though these remain unused.

Tables and Benches: A long trestle table with benches has been haphazardly constructed from old crates. An old table and a set of chairs sized for dwarves occupies the side room, but these are so full of dry rot that they crumble into dust and splinters if used.

Lower Guardroom: A single bunk and table with two chairs occupies this small chamber. An arrow slit looks out into the corridor beyond. The door is locked (the longtooth hunters each have a key).

Iron Statue: The statue on the landing stands 10 feet tall and depicts a dwarf miner of the Ironfell Clan.

Great Hall

Encounter Level 8 (1,625 XP)

Setup

1 dryad (D)
5 human lackeys (H)
1 longtooth hunter (L)
2 cacklefiend hyenas (C)

This encounter takes place in areas 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 of the fortress map.

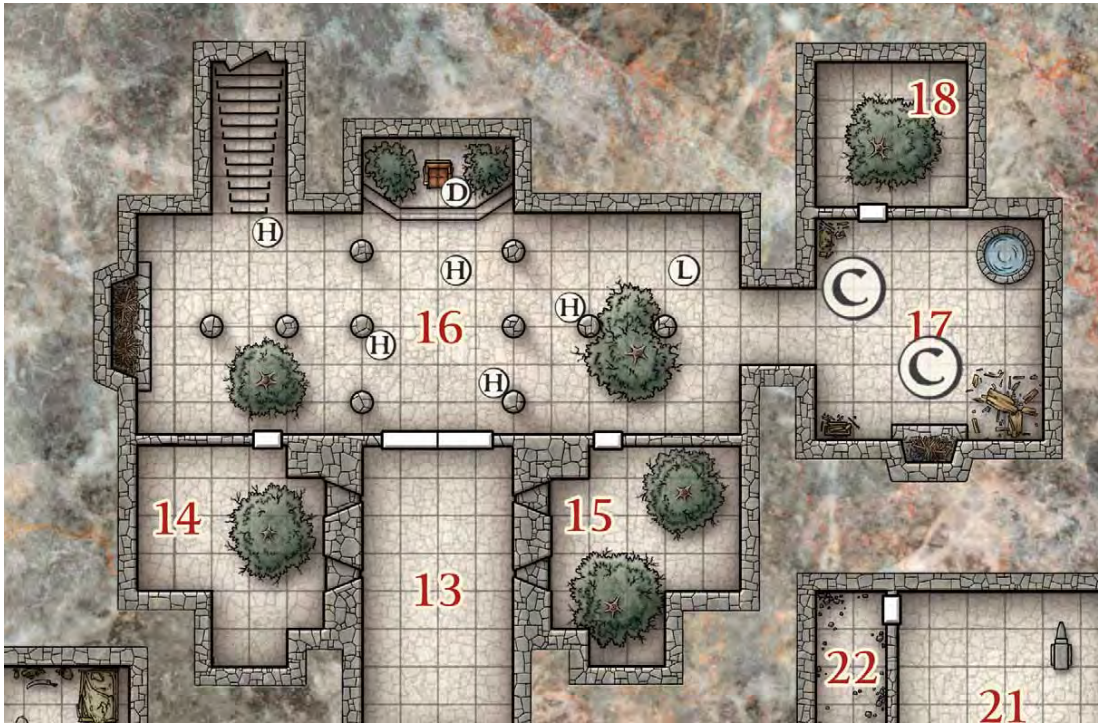
Queen Shephatiah has placed a loyal dryad follower in command of the fortress, creating an effective decoy in the event that intruders manage to slip past the defenders of the upper levels. The real queen's duplicity extends so far as to having all her servants in the fortress believe that this dryad is their true leader. The dryad cloaks herself in the illusion of an eladrin female.

When the PCs enter this area, read:

The heavy scent of decay is sharp here. Strange trees with silver-gray bark and gnarled branches rise almost to the ceiling, their thick roots punching down into the stone of the floor. Atop a dais to the north, an eladrin female sits upon an ornate throne. Five human brigands and a shifter warrior stand between you and the throne, moving to attack.

If a PC succeeds on an Insight check opposed to the dryad's Bluff, read:

As if a veil had been lifted, you see through the corporeal disguise of the eladrin queen, revealing a foul humanoid plant creature beneath.



Dryad	**Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium fey humanoid (plant)	XP 400
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +12
HP 92; **Bloodied** 46	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21	
Speed 8 (forest walk)	
(+) **Claws** (standard; at-will)	
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, or 1d8 + 9 damage if the target is the only enemy adjacent to the dryad.	
Deceptive Veil (minor; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**	
The dryad can disguise itself to appear as any Medium humanoid, usually a beautiful elf or eladrin. A successful Insight check (opposed by the dryad's Bluff check) pierces the disguise.	
Treestride (move; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**	
The dryad can teleport 8 squares if it begins and ends adjacent to a tree, a treant, or a plant of Large size or bigger.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Bluff +10, Insight +12, Stealth +12	
Str 19 (+8)	**Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 12 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 13 (+5)

5 Human Lackeys	**Level 7 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 75
Initiative +3	**Senses** Perception +4
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15; see also *mob rule*	
Speed 6	
(+) **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+12 vs. AC; 6 damage.	
Mob Rule	
The human lackey gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while at least two other human lackeys are within 5 squares of it.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Str 16 (+6)	**Dex** 11 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+4)
Equipment leather armor, club	

Longtooth Hunter	Level 6 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, shifter	XP 250
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16	
Speed 5	
(+) **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the longtooth hunter's next turn.	
Hamstring (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**	
The longtooth hunter makes a longsword attack. If the attack hits, it makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +9 vs. Reflex; the target is slowed (save ends).	
Follow Quarry (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy shifts; at-will)	
The longtooth hunter shifts toward the enemy.	
Longtooth Shifting (minor, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Healing**	
Until the end of the encounter or until rendered unconscious, the longtooth hunter gains a +2 bonus to damage rolls. In addition, for as long as it is bloodied, the longtooth hunter gains regeneration 2.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +14, Endurance +11, Nature +9	
Str 20 (+8)	**Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 9 (+2)
Equipment chainmail, light shield, longsword	

2 Cacklefiend Hyenas	Level 7 Brute
Large elemental beast	XP 300
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +11; low-light vision
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48; see also *acid bloodspurt*	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18	
Resist 20 acid	
Speed 8	
(+) **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid**	
+10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends); see also *pack attack*.	
Fiendish Cackle (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fear**	
Close burst 3; deafened creatures are immune; targets enemies; +8 vs. Will; the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the cacklefiend hyena's next turn.	
Acid Bloodspurt (when first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Acid**	
Close burst 1; automatic hit; 2d8 acid damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).	
Pack Attack	
A cacklefiend hyena deals an extra 1d6 damage against an enemy adjacent to two or more of the cacklefiend hyena's allies.	
Harrier	
If a cacklefiend hyena is adjacent to an enemy, all other creatures have combat advantage against that enemy when making melee attacks.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 20 (+8)	**Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 6 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+3)

Tactics

The human lackeys stay close to take advantage of *mob rule* as they prevent anyone from reaching their queen.

The longtooth hunter chooses a lightly armored target for his first *hamstring* attack. He stays in the thick of melee, flanking with the human lackeys or the cacklefiend hyenas if possible.

The cacklefiend hyenas enter the fray in the second round, using *fiendish cackle* to harry foes, then following up with bite attacks.

The dryad stays out of combat for as long as possible, holding her action and using *treestride* to teleport behind one of her sussur trees if a PC steps onto the dais or hits her with a ranged attack. She stays at the edge of combat, hoping to pick off a lone PC to deal extra damage with her claw attacks.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light from shrouded oil lamps set high on the pillars.

Ceiling: 40 feet high.

Pillars: These provide cover and can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

Dais and Throne: This stone platform stands 2 feet above the floor. Atop it is a marble throne carved with bas-reliefs of dwarf miners at work. The throne provides superior cover to anyone who squeezes behind it.

Sussur Trees: The power of the dryad has caused a grove of sussur trees to erupt through the flagstones of the floor, their topmost limbs brushing the ceiling. Also known as deeproot trees, sussurs grow only in the caverns of the Underdark. Their gnarled branches have few leaves but feature sprawling clusters of aerial roots. With a DC 17 Nature check, a PC determines that these trees must somehow be feeding on energy within the ground (the subtle emanations of chaos energy from the mines below).

The trunks of these trees can be climbed with a DC 17 Athletics check. The sparse branches of a tree (beginning 10 feet up) provide concealment to anyone within them.

Kitchen: The fortress's main kitchen lies just off the great hall. It includes a side larder, now empty except for a lone sussur tree.

Tables: These stone tables are tall enough that a Small creature can move under them and gain cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up onto a table. A character can make a DC 17 Strength check to tip over a stone table, which then grants superior cover.

Cistern: A well shaft descends 20 feet to a cistern of cold, crystal-clear water. A steel bucket and chain are bolted to the wall nearby.

Dead Villager: The decomposing corpse of a villager from Dunesend lies next to the throne. If the PCs see through the dryad's *deceptive veil* before she enters combat, they see her feet turn to roots digging deep into the body.

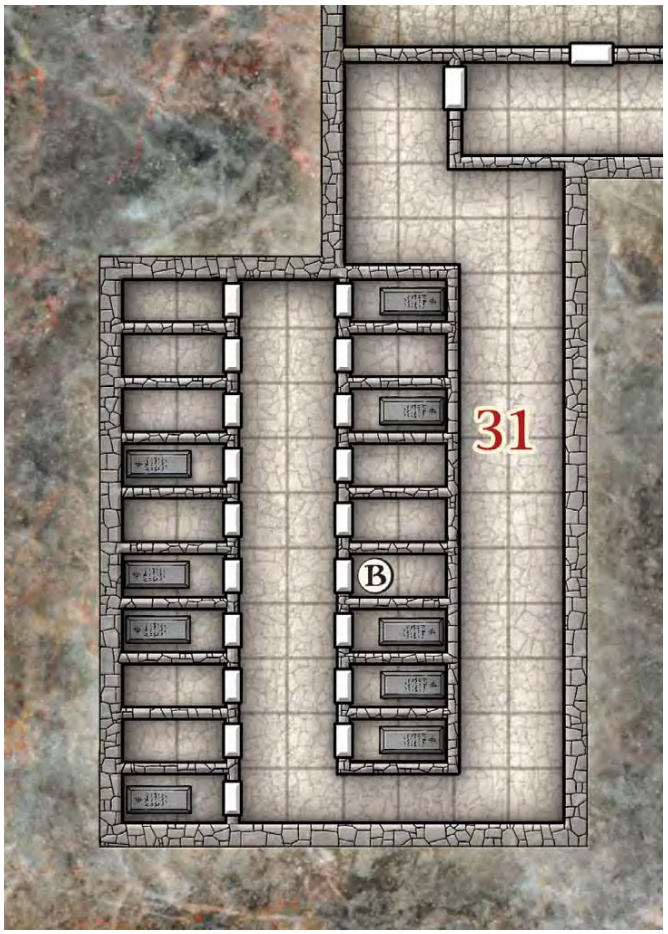
CRYPTS

Encounter Level 7 (1,500 XP)

Setup

1 lesser berbalang (B)

The dwarves of Karak interred their dead here. A berbalang now makes its lair among these ancient corpses.



When the PCs enter this area, read:

Where this long hall turns back on itself, its walls are lined to both sides with steel doors etched with glowing Dwarven runes.

When the berbalang emerges, read:

One of the vault doors slams open. Within is a hideous creature with batlike wings and feral claws, shrieking as it attacks.

Tactics

The berbalang *summons* a duplicate each round in an adjacent cell. The creatures focus on one or two lightly armored PCs, flanking to make use of their *berbalang sneak attack*. When a duplicate is reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, the berbalang maneuvers next to it to make use of its *sacrifice* power. If reduced to 50 hit points or fewer, the berbalang flees the crypt and the fortress.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The glowing runes of the vault doors fill the area with dim light.

Ceiling: 20 feet high.

Burial Vaults: The steel vault doors are scribed with glowing runes that list the names of those interred within. The remains held here have mostly been consumed by the berbalang.

Lesser Berbalang **Level 7 Solo Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid XP 1,500

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +6
AC 22; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 18; see also *psychic deflection*
HP 312; **Bloodied** 156
Saving Throws +5
Speed 6, fly 8
Action Points 2

Claw (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.

Summon Duplicate (minor, not while bloodied; at-will) ✦ **Conjuration, Psychic**
The berbalang manifests an exact duplicate of itself in an unoccupied adjacent square. It can have no more than four duplicates at once, and duplicates cannot summon other duplicates. When a duplicate appears, it makes an initiative check and joins the battle on that initiative count. All damage a duplicate deals is treated as psychic damage. A duplicate has the same statistics as the berbalang except for its hit points. When the berbalang manifests a duplicate, the berbalang loses one-quarter of its current hit points and the duplicate appears with that quantity of hit points. The berbalang's maximum number of hit points remains the same. Duplicates last until the berbalang reaches 0 hit points, absorbs them, or uses *sacrifice*. A duplicate must stay within 10 squares of the berbalang at all times or it disappears.

Absorb Duplicate (standard, at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The berbalang absorbs a duplicate adjacent to it and regains 30 hit points.

Berbalang Sneak Attack
A berbalang or a duplicate that flanks an enemy with another duplicate deals an extra 1d8 damage on melee attacks against that enemy.

Sacrifice (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Area burst 1 centered on a duplicate; the berbalang can cause one of its duplicates to explode in a burst of psychic gore; +8 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, plus the target is dazed (save ends). *Miss:* No damage, but the target is dazed (save ends). *Hit or Miss:* The berbalang takes 15 damage.

Psychic Deflection (immediate reaction, when the berbalang is damaged by an attack; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
The berbalang can deflect the damage it takes from an attack to one of its duplicates. Any effects or secondary attacks included in the attack are also deflected to the duplicate. The damage a duplicate takes in this way is considered psychic damage.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Str 16 (+8) **Dex** 22 (+11) **Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 14 (+7) **Cha** 15 (+7)

Foiled Ambush

Encounter Level 6 (1,225 XP)

Setup

1 troglodyte curse chanter (T)
5 cavern chokers (C)

This encounter occurs only after the party has finished exploring the upper levels. Before the PCs can make further plans, a sandstorm descends on the area, forcing them to linger within the fortress.

When the PCs return to the entry tunnel, read:

The path you followed around the bluff is gone, swallowed by a raging sandstorm. It is not clear how long the storm will last, but the empty fortress offers shelter. However, on the sand-strewn floor past the portcullis, you notice something. Humanoid tracks have been laid down by bare feet, a telltale yellow feather trodden beneath them. The Birdman appears to have left the fortress, setting out into the deadly storm.

If the PCs are inclined to go after the Birdman, they can brave the storm for only a few minutes before being forced back to shelter. No sign of the Birdman can be found.

Queen Shephatiah learns of the PCs' infiltration when the dryad fails to appear at area 29 with her daily report. The troglodyte curse chanter is charged with maintaining contact with the dryad, opening the secret tunnel from the mines with his Ironfell signet ring (see "Return to the Cells," below). When the dryad failed to report and the curse chanter saw the Birdman's cell empty, he sent word to Shephatiah and took a team of chokers to investigate.

Troglodyte Curse Chanter **Level 8 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid (reptile) XP 350

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
Troglodyte Stench aura 1; living enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
HP 93; **Bloodied** 46
AC 23; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 22
Speed 5

⨺ **Quarterstaff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

⨺ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
+10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 2 damage.

↛ **Poison Ray** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 5 poison damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

↛ **Cavern Curse** (standard; recharge ⚁ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 5; +11 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and is slowed (save ends both).

✧ **Tunnel Grace** (minor 1/round; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Close burst 10; all allies in the burst gain +5 speed until the end of the troglodyte shaman's next turn.

✧ **Chant of Renewal** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
Close burst 5; bloodied allies in the burst regain 15 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Draconic
Skills Dungeoneering +13, Endurance +14, Religion +9
Str 15 (+6) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 18 (+8)
Con 21 (+9) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+6)
Equipment robes, quarterstaff, skull mask

This encounter assumes that the PCs set up camp in the northern overlook (area 19 of the fortress map). This area is the least despoiled and most defensible area of the complex. If the PCs choose to rest in another location, rework the encounter as necessary.

This encounter occurs 4 hours after the PCs finish their previous exploration. This interrupts any attempt to take an extended rest. If some of the PCs indicate they are sleeping, note which characters are awake and which are on watch.

The troglodyte curse chanter and one cavern choker come up from area 25. Four more cavern chokers approach from the courtyard and the corridor to the west after slipping through the fortress's lower level. The curse chanter uses his Ironfell signet ring to open any locked doors and raise the portcullis.

5 Cavern Chokers **Level 4 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21
AC 17 (see also *chameleon hide*); **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)

⨺ **Tentacle Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape). A target trying to escape the grab takes a -4 penalty to the check.

⨺ **Choke** (standard; at-will)
Grabbed target only; +9 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 3 damage.

Body Shield (immediate interrupt, when targeted by a melee or a ranged attack against Reflex or AC; recharges when the choker makes a successful *tentacle claw* or *choke* attack)
The cavern choker makes its grabbed victim the target instead. The choker cannot use this power to redirect attacks made by a creature it is currently grabbing.

Chameleon Hide (minor; at-will)
The cavern choker gains concealment until the start of its next turn. It can't use this power while grabbing a creature or while grabbed.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +10
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 6 (+0)

Perception Check
DC 17 (if the PCs left the portcullis down): *From beyond the eastern door, you hear the rattling of a portcullis being raised.*

Just before the attack, the PCs receive a mysterious warning:

Suddenly, the silence is shattered by a frantic chirping. The Birdman's canaries are nowhere to be seen, yet their shrill warning echoes from the stones.

When the chokers attack, read:

You see sudden movement at the arrow slits along the south wall. Three gray-skinned creatures with long, spindly arms are squeezing through the narrow gaps.

If the PCs have barred or spiked the eastern door, it takes the troglodyte 1d4 rounds to break through.

When the troglodyte enters, read:

A hulking troglodyte with a skull mask and staff bursts through the east door, another gray-skinned choker behind him.

Tactics

The chokers make tentacle claw attacks against lightly armored PCs, grabbing in order to *choke*. They stay in the thick of melee with grabbed foes, trusting their *body shield* to deflect attacks.

The troglodyte curse chanter hits the chokers with *tunnel grace* each round, using *cavern curse* against the strongest-looking melee combatants. It uses *poison ray* against PCs on the edge of the fray.

All these creatures fight to the death for the Queen of the Drylands.

Development

Any search of the curse chanter reveals the Ironfell signet ring he carries.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Whatever the PCs use.

Ceiling: 20 feet high.

Rusted Portcullises: The portcullises are locked in place, requiring a DC 23 Strength check to raise or break through. A character at a winch near one of the arrow slits can raise a portcullis with two move actions and a DC 10 Strength check, or can lower it as a minor action. A portcullis can also be raised or lowered in 1 round by anyone bearing an Ironfell signet ring that is touched to the bars or the winch (a minor action).

Arrow Slits: These apertures provide superior cover to creatures on either side of them. However, they allow attacks to be made only in the two squares adjacent to them. A creature standing in a square adjacent to the wall 5 feet or more from an arrow slit cannot be seen by anyone on the other side.

The cavern chokers' *rubbery bones* allow them to squeeze through these narrow openings at half speed.

Return to the Cells

In the aftermath of combat, any Perception check notices a scattering of yellow feathers near the passage to area 16. Subsequent checks reveal more feathers in the hall at area 23 and outside area 29. If the PCs enter the area of the cells, they see the following.

The solid floor of the southeast cell now contains a perfectly round hole at the head of a smooth-walled shaft leading straight down. Below the floor, an aging pulley system descends into darkness. The pulley raises and lowers an 8-foot-wide wooden lift platform that sits now a few feet below the hole. The battered platform is emblazoned with the faded crest of Clan Ironfell.

Touching an Ironfell signet ring to the floor of the cell causes the magic portal to close or open. Of the mysterious Birdman, there is no further sign.

The Way Down

The ancient hoist shows signs of repair and much use. Unless the PCs elect to descend the shaft in some other way (it takes a DC 25 Athletics check to scale its smooth walls), up to six characters can descend on the platform. It takes a DC 10 Strength check to lower the lift and a DC 15 Strength check to raise it. Up to two other characters can aid the character making the check.

Mine Entrance

Encounter Level 8 (1,625 XP)

Setup

3 troglodyte spear warriors (W)
1 troglodyte mauler (M)
2 troglodyte impalers (I)

The entrance to Queen Shephatiah's mines are guarded by a force of troglodytes and the ancient dwarven trap they have restored. The troglodytes are on alert and waiting for the return of the curse chanter's strike team. The tactical map shows their position if the PCs approach unseen and unheard (for example, by sending a scout down to reconnoiter). If these creatures are aware of the PCs' approach, see below.

When the PCs can see beyond the portcullis, read:
The passage ahead is blocked by a portcullis, a pair of troglodytes on guard beyond it. From behind them comes the sound of voices speaking in hushed tones.

The troglodytes sound an alarm as soon as they see the PCs, or if the curse chanter and its party do not reappear immediately after the descent of the lift. If the PCs take more than 1 round to decide how to attack, the troglodytes all move into defensive positions in the corridor.

Tactics

The troglodytes initially stay back from the portcullis, trying to lure the PCs into approaching and triggering the poisoned dart wall trap. Once that trap is activated or bypassed, they approach. (The trap fires only south of the portcullis.)

3 Troglodyte Spear Warriors **Level 12 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid (reptile) XP 175
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision
Troglodyte Stench aura 1; living enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 25; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21
Speed 5
Longspear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 7 damage.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Draconic
Skills Athletics +14, Endurance +13
Str 18 (+9) **Dex** 12 (+6) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 6 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+4)
Equipment light shield, longspear

Troglodyte Mauler **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (reptile) XP 250
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision
Troglodyte Stench aura 1; living enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
HP 74; **Bloodied** 37
AC 22; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Speed 5
Greatclub (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the troglodyte mauler's next turn.
Claw (standard; at-will)
+10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage.
Bite (minor 1/round; at-will)
Requires combat advantage; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 damage, and until the end of the troglodyte mauler's next turn, healing on the target restores only half the total amount.
Javelin (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Draconic
Skills Athletics +12, Endurance +12
Str 18 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 6 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Equipment greatclub, 2 javelins

Until the PCs raise the portcullis, the troglodyte warriors harry them with spear attacks from 2 squares away. Once the portcullis is up, the warriors form a defensive line, holding the PCs in place while the impalers and the mauler make ranged attacks from behind.

2 Troglodyte Impalers **Level 7 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid (reptile) XP 300
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
Troglodyte Stench aura 1; living enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
HP 69; **Bloodied** 34
AC 22; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18
Speed 5
Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.
Claw (standard; at-will)
+9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage.
Javelin (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.
Impaling Shot (standard; recharge ⚀ ⚁ ⚂ ⚃) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires javelin; ranged 10; +12 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage, and the troglodyte impaler makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +10 vs. Fortitude; the target is restrained (save ends).
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Draconic
Skills Athletics +12, Endurance +13
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 21 (+8) **Int** 7 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+2)
Equipment spear, quiver of 6 javelins

The troglodyte impalers launch javelin attacks against lightly armored PCs and anyone making ranged attacks, using *impaling shot* as often as possible. Once the PCs move past the warriors, they continue to make ranged attacks for as long as possible, falling back into the northern chamber. An impaler makes spear attacks if surrounded, but it takes any opportunity to move back into javelin range.

The troglodyte mauler moves up with his warrior allies to fight in the first rank when the PCs raise the portcullis. He targets the strongest-looking melee combatant in the first rank of PCs, marking the foe with greatclub attacks.

All these creatures fight to the death.

Seams of Chaos

Within the rough mine shafts to the north, the PCs catch their first sight of the mysterious veins of red stone lining the walls of the mine.

Within the damp gray stone of the cavern walls, a faint light pulses. On close examination, you see veins of dark red twisting through the stone of the walls and ceiling, glowing with a dull light.

A DC 17 Dungeoneering or Nature check reveals that this is not a known Underdark phenomena. A DC 17 Arcana check identifies the stuff as veins of raw elemental energy that has somehow leached into the natural world.

Features of the Area

Illumination: None.

Ceiling: 10 feet high

Entry Shaft: The shaft descends 80 feet from the cell above to the mine below. Its sheer walls can be climbed with a DC 25 Athletics check.

Lift Platform: The 8-foot-wide lift platform can carry up to six Medium or smaller creatures. It takes a DC 10 Strength check to lower the lift and a DC 15 Strength check to raise it. Up to two other characters can aid the character making the check.

Mine Entrance: Just below the entry shaft, this finished stone chamber is piled high with ore carts, storage bins, shoring timbers, and spare parts for the hoist system.

Guardroom: The guardroom contains a rough table and chairs, as well as the winch that controls the portcullis.

Chairs: These are difficult terrain.

Poisoned Dart Wall **Level 6 Blaster**
Trap XP 250

Darts fire from the wall, preventing characters from advancing along the corridor.

Trap: Each round on its initiative, the trap fires a barrage of poison darts that randomly attack 2d4 targets in the entire area south of the portcullis.

Perception
- DC 17: The character notices the small holes in the walls.
- DC 21: The character notices the tripwire trigger.

Initiative +7

Trigger
When a character moves across the tripwire south of the portcullis, the trap rolls initiative.

Attack
Standard Action Ranged 20
Targets: 2d4 targets in range
Attack: +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8+2 damage and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Countermeasures
- An adjacent character can disable the tripwire with a DC 17 Thievery check.
- A character who moves no more than 1 square on a turn gains a +5 bonus to AC against the dart attacks.

Tables: A table is tall enough that a Small creature can move under it and gain cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up onto a table. A character can make a DC 10 Strength check to tip over a table, which then grants superior cover.

Rusted Portcullis: The portcullis is locked in place, requiring a DC 23 Strength check to raise or break through. A character at the winch in the guardroom can raise the portcullis with two move actions and a DC 10 Strength check, or can lower it as a minor action. The portcullis can also be raised or lowered in 1 round by anyone bearing an Ironfell signet ring that is touched to the bars or the winch (a minor action).

Tunnels: Beyond the guardroom, the tunnels and chambers of the mine become hewn stone shored up by ancient timbers.

Rubble: These sections of crumbling stone are difficult terrain.

Chaos Mines

Encounter Level 7 (1,500 XP)

Setup

1 bloodweb spider swarm (S)
1 barlgura (B)
1 chillborn zombie (Z)
2 carrion crawlers (C)

As the PCs make their way through the mine, they see signs of ancient battles and renewed mining activity.

Recent tracks along the main passageway lead you on. The central caverns you pass through show signs of recent mining activity, though on a much smaller scale than the dwarves' operations of old.

Here and there, dwarf skeletons are strewn across the rocky ground, rusted weapons lying nearby. The dwarves of Karak appear to have slain each other in the end. Oddly, however, many of the skeletons appear to be missing their skulls.

The track the PCs follow leads them to a former main cavern that now guards access to Queen Shephatiah's lair. One of her demonic lieutenants has taken charge of marshalling the natural predators that lair here. As the PCs approach from the southeast, the barlgura watches from the cover of his ledge.

When the PCs enter this area, read:

A vast gallery opens up here where the dwarves of Ironfell once worked, their long-rotted bodies now scattered before you. The rickety remains of ancient ladders and carts are spread across the cavern. One prominent vein of the strange, red-glowing stone crosses this chamber's floor and climbs its walls, its cold light pulsing brightly.

Perception Check
DC 7: *As in the chambers above, more than half the dwarven bodies here are missing their skulls.*
DC 12: *From around the corner of an outcropping, the shaggy head of a huge beast watches you.*
DC 17: *The sounds of skittering stone echo faintly from further into the chamber, an unseen creature moving there.*

The chillborn zombie rises as soon as a PC passes through any square of elemental energy adjacent to it.

When the chillborn zombie rises, read:

A rustling in the rubble reveals a gray-skinned hand grasping the air. A bearded face follows, the animated corpse of a long-dead dwarf lurching to its feet. A cold mist flows from between its black teeth.

Bloodweb Spider Swarm — **Level 7 Soldier**
Medium natural beast (spider, swarm) — XP 300
Initiative +12 — **Senses** Perception +6; tremorsense 5
Swarm Attack aura 1; the bloodweb spider swarm makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura. In addition, an enemy that enters or starts its turn in the aura is slowed (save ends) by strands of crimson webbing.
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40
AC 21; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 16
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 10 against close and area attacks
Speed 4, climb 4 (spider climb)
⊕ **Swarm of Fangs** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
+10 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 2 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).
Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +15
Str 14 (+5) — **Dex** 24 (+10) — **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 16 (+6) — **Int** 1 (-2) — **Cha** 8 (+2)

Barlgura — **Level 8 Brute**
Large elemental beast (demon) — XP 350
Initiative +7 — **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 108; **Bloodied** 54; see also *savage howl*
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17
Resist 10 variable (1/encounter; see glossary)
Speed 8, climb 8
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2, +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, or 2d8 + 6 damage if the barlgura is bloodied.
⊕ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)
The barlgura makes two slam attacks.
Savage Howl (free, when first bloodied; encounter)
The barlgura and all allies within 5 squares of the barlgura gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the end of the barlgura's next turn.
Alignment Chaotic evil — **Languages** Abyssal
Skills Athletics +15
Str 22 (+10) — **Dex** 16 (+7) — **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 18 (+8) — **Int** 6 (+2) — **Cha** 12 (+5)

Chillborn Zombie — **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural animate (cold, undead) — XP 250
Initiative +5 — **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
Chillborn Aura (**Cold**) aura 2; any creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura takes 5 cold damage. Multiple chillborn auras deal cumulative damage.
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35; see also *death burst*
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 cold, 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 fire, 5 radiant
Speed 4
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the chillborn zombie's next turn and takes ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends); see also *ice reaper.*
✧ **Death Burst** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Cold**
The chillborn zombie explodes. Close burst 1; +9 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 2 cold damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
Ice Reaper ✦ **Cold**
The chillborn zombie deals an extra 5 cold damage to an immobilized creature.
Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** –
Str 19 (+7) — **Dex** 10 (+3) — **Wis** 10 (+3)
Con 15 (+5) — **Int** 2 (-1) — **Cha** 6 (+1)

2 Carrion Crawlers		Level 7 Controller
Large aberrant beast		XP 300
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +5; darkvision	
HP 81; **Bloodied** 40		
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17		
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)		
⊕ **Tentacles** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**		
Reach 2; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d4 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison and is slowed (save ends both). *First Failed Save:* The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Save:* The target is stunned instead of immobilized (save ends). Saving throws made against the carrion crawler's paralytic tentacles take a –2 penalty.		
Bite (standard; at-will)		
+12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.		
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –	
Str 20 (+8)	**Dex** 16 (+6)	**Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 17 (+6)	**Int** 2 (-1)	**Cha** 16 (+6)

Tactics

The chillborn zombie wades into the largest group of PCs with slam attacks, targeting immobilized creatures for extra damage from its *ice reaper* power.

The carrion crawlers surge into battle as soon as the zombie rises, targeting individual PCs with repeated attacks in the hope of a quick kill.

The bloodweb spider swarm stays in the thick of combat to maximize the effect of its *swarm attack* aura, slowing the PCs in the hope of making them easier targets for the carrion crawlers.

If it is not spotted, the barlgura waits until the PCs are engaged by the chillborn zombie or the bloodweb spider swarm before attacking. Once in melee, it makes *double attacks*, staying close to its servants to maximize the effect of its *savage howl*. It stays within the vein of elemental energy whenever possible, hoping that the area's effect hinders any PC making melee attacks against it.

Development

The chillborn zombie was once the mine-thane of Karak, killed with the rest of his people and raised to undeath by the lingering power of the elemental energy in this area. Any Perception check made to search the body shows that the ring finger on its right hand has been recently hacked off (when Shephatiah found and took the Ironfell signet ring).

Features of the Area

Illumination: The vein of elemental energy fills the chamber with dim light.

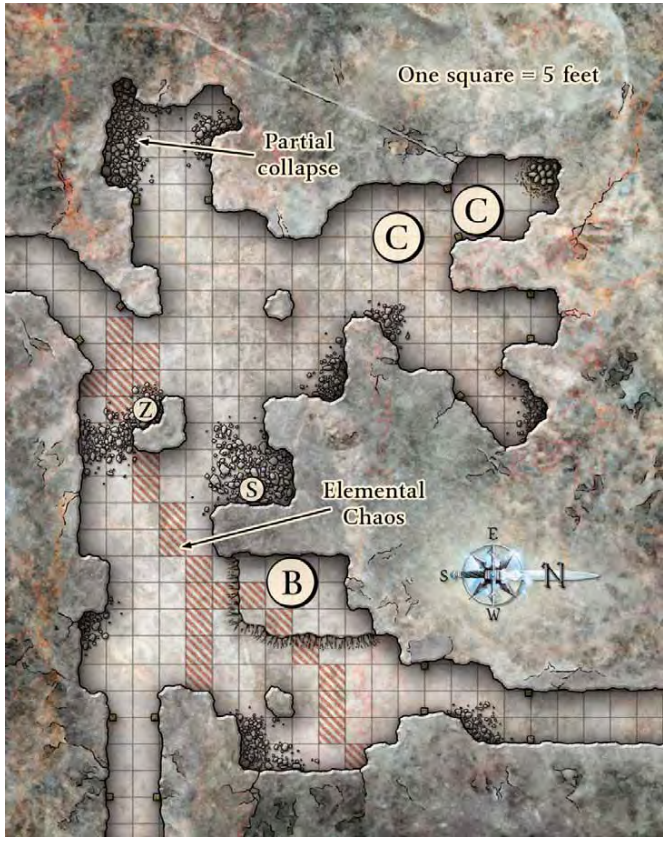
Ceiling: 60 feet high.

Ledge: The barlgura's ledge is 20 feet high. It can be climbed with a DC 20 Athletics check.

Rubble: These sections of crumbling stone and debris are difficult terrain.

Elemental Chaos: A vein of glowing red stone tainted with elemental energy crosses the cavern floor and climbs the walls. Creatures of chaotic evil alignment standing in a square of elemental chaos gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls. Creatures of any other alignment standing in a square of elemental chaos take a –2 penalty to attack rolls and damage rolls.

Eggs: This clutch of a dozen 1-foot-diameter green ovoid spheres are carrion crawler eggs. If any PC approaches within 10 squares of the eggs during combat, the carrion crawlers gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against that character.



Queen's Retinue

Encounter Level 10 (2,600 XP)

Setup

Shephatiah, guardian naga (N)
2 lesser mezzodemons (M)
1 firelasher (F)

This deep cavern was Clan Ironfell's downfall. When the dwarves broke into this area, they uncovered a rift leading directly to the Elemental Chaos. Disaster struck as the rift flared, its terrible energy spreading along the veins of chaos stone throughout all the caverns of Karak. The dwarves of Clan Ironfell turned on each other in madness and were slain to the last. When those in the fortress above came down in search of their kin, they too were lost.

The guardian naga Queen Shephatiah found her way to this cavern from the Elemental Chaos, discovering and learning how to control the rift. (Shephatiah is treated as an elemental creature by virtue of the *primordial ring* she wears. See the treasure entry in "Features of the Area.")

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

A circular cavern before you shows signs of excavation on its far side. However, the way ahead is blocked by a wide crevice that pulses with a lurid red glow. In the shadow of that light stand two red-skinned demons, slashing the air with three-clawed hands. Behind them are piled hundreds of dwarven skulls, a gruesome bier on which coils a serpentine creature with a humanlike face.

Queen Shephatiah, Guardian Naga — **Level 12 Elite Artillery**
Large immortal elemental* magical beast (reptile) — XP 1,400
Initiative +10 — **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
HP 186; **Bloodied** 93
AC 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Tail Slap (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Word of Pain (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 20; +17 vs. Will; 2d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Spit Poison (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Poison**
Close blast 3; +15 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 2 poison damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage, a -2 penalty to Fortitude defense, and a -2 penalty to saving throws (save ends all).

Thunderstrike (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Thunder**
Area burst 1 within 20; +16 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is not dazed.

Alignment Evil — **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Draconic, Abyssal, Primordial
Skills Arcana +15, History +15, Insight +13
Str 16 (+9) — **Dex** 18 (+10) — **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 15 (+8) — **Int** 18 (+10) — **Cha** 12 (+7)
* Shephatiah is considered to be an elemental creature while she wears her *primordial ring*.

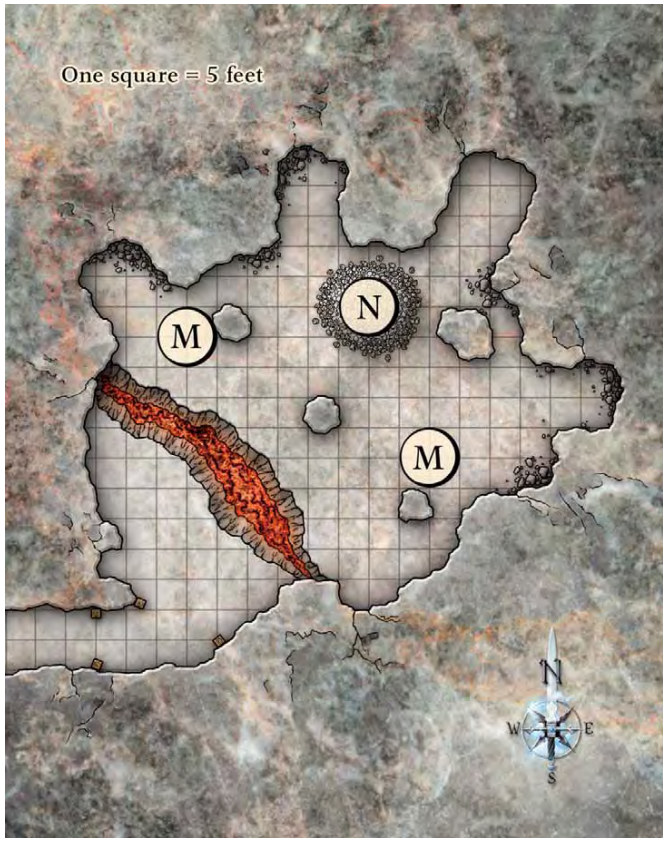
2 Lesser Mezzodemons — **Level 7 Soldier**
Large elemental humanoid (demon) — XP 300
Initiative +9 — **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
HP 113; **Bloodied** 56
AC 23; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Resist 20 poison, 10 variable (2/encounter; *MM* 282)
Speed 6

Trident (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires trident; reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.

Skewering Tines (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, ongoing 5 damage target enemies only and the target is restrained (save ends both). While the target is restrained, the mezzodemon can't make trident attacks.

Poison Breath (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Poison**
Close blast 3; targets enemies; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 2 poison damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic evil — **Languages** Abyssal
Skills Intimidate +11
Str 20 (+10) — **Dex** 15 (+7) — **Wis** 16 (+8)
Con 17 (+8) — **Int** 10 (+5) — **Cha** 13 (+6)
Equipment trident



Tactics

Queen Shephatiah and her defenders remain on their side of the rift, intent on forcing the PCs to come to them.

The mezzodemons move to the edge of the rift and use *poison breath* against targets in range. They make

Firelasher	Level 11 Skirmisher
Large elemental magical beast (air, fire)	XP 600
Initiative +12	**Senses** Perception +5
HP 108; **Bloodied** 54	
AC 25; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 20	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 25 fire	
Speed fly 8 (hover)	
Fire Lash (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**	
Reach 2; +14 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 fire damage.	
Wildfire Cyclone (standard; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) ✦ **Fire**	
Close burst 2; +14 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 fire damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is neither pushed nor knocked prone.	
Whirlwind Dash (standard; recharge ⁞⁞) ✦ **Fire**	
The firelasher can move up to twice its speed. It can move through spaces occupied by other creatures without provoking opportunity attacks. It must end its move in an unoccupied space. Any creature whose space the firelasher enters takes 10 fire damage.	
Mutable Shape	
The firelasher can squeeze through spaces as though it were a Medium creature.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Primordial
Str 11 (+5)	**Dex** 21 (+10) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 12 (+6)	**Int** 7 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+4)

trident attacks against PCs within reach on the rift's far side, or against those who attempt to cross it. Once engaged in melee, they make *skewering tines* attacks.

Shephatiah uses *word of pain* and *thunderstrike* against targets on the far side of the rift, targeting ranged combatants or PCs not engaging the mezzodemons. If the PCs cross the rift, she moves behind the skull pile and continues to attack at range, making *word of pain* attacks.

The firelasher lurks in the rift, emerging in the second round. It moves through the PCs with its *whirlwind dash*, making *wildfire cyclone* attacks in an attempt to push targets into the rift.

If Shephatiah is killed or knocked unconscious, the firelasher and the mezzodemons flee through the rift and disappear into the Elemental Chaos. The self-styled Queen of the Drylands fights to the finish.

Conclusion

Set apart from the refuse and debris of Shephatiah's lair, the PCs find clues that explain how the naga reopened the mines—and hints of future conflicts.

A DC 17 Search check within the chamber turns up a set of scrolls holding parchment correspondence written and transported by the naga's mezzodemon lieutenants. The missives are in Deep Speech, and require a DC 17 Intelligence check to translate.

The parchments detail how Shephatiah discovered the portal leading to the Karak Lode on a sojourn within the Elemental Chaos. They also make reference to the reopening of the mines being financed by a group that the scrolls do not name. These unknown masters have claimed the wealth of the Karak Lode for themselves, and are having that wealth shipped to them by way of the elemental rift. While the parchments indicate that this group intends to ramp up production in the mines in response to an increasing need for ore, the cryptic notes indicate that Shephatiah herself does not know the identity of those she works for.

(If Queen Shephatiah is kept alive for questioning, do not let the PCs find the scrolls. Instead, have the naga bitterly bargain for her freedom, offering the PCs the above information if they allow her to flee.)

Features of the Area

Illumination: The rift fills the area with dim light.

Ceiling: 20 feet high.

Bed of Skulls: Queen Shephatiah's nest is composed of hundreds of dwarven skulls taken from the bodies that litter the mines. The pile provides cover and is difficult terrain for any creature smaller than Large.

Elemental Chaos Rift: A 20-foot-deep chasm cuts through the stone floor of the cavern, filled at the bottom with what appears to be bubbling magma shot through with vibrant hues of purple and blue. This barrier of elemental energy is a gate to the Elemental Chaos.

The walls of the rift can be climbed with a DC 20 Athletics check. Elemental creatures can jump into the rift to pass through to the Elemental Chaos (a move action that deals no damage). All other creatures jumping or falling into the rift take 2d10 falling damage. Nonelemental creatures that hit the bottom of the rift find themselves waist-deep in a field of raw elemental energy. This is difficult terrain and deals 3d6 damage per round to nonelemental creatures within it.

Treasure: In addition to any other treasure you place here, Queen Shephatiah wears a *primordial ring* on the tip of her tail and has an Ironfell signet ring hidden behind her bed of skulls (Perception DC 17).

Primordial Ring	Level 14
This ring consists of twisted metal bands whose colors shift before your eyes.	
Item Slot: Ring	21,000 gp
Property: You are treated as an elemental creature (*MM* 281) as long as the ring is worn.	
Power (Daily): Minor Action: Gain resistance 10 variable (*MM* 282) until the end of the encounter or for 5 minutes. You cannot use this power to resist a damage type to which you have a vulnerability. If you've reached at least one milestone today, your resistance 10 variable becomes (2/encounter). ⚔	

About the Author

Greg is a lifelong gamer who has been writing adventures for the past half-dozen years. He received his first ENnie award this year leaving only the Heisman Trophy and Nobel Prize left on his list of lifetime goals. He considers himself to be well ahead of schedule.

Prelude: Information Management

BY JAMES WYATT

Here's why information management is so important:

> ***"Only problem I see is that Gredda seems to be having something of a crisis of faith, switching from the priesthood of Kord to the priesthood of Pelor within three paragraphs of background."***
>
> *–Firedrake, on the forums*

Thanks, Firedrake. Gredda is a priest of Kord. I messed that up when I was typing up my campaign handout, referring to her later as a priest of Pelor. Oops!

Greenbier Campaign: Story and Prophecy

So far for the Greenbrier campaign, I've created a fairly detailed backdrop for the starting area (the village of Greenbrier), sketched out a campaign arc of what adventures I plan to use, and discussed keeping track of all this information. Something important is missing, though. As it stands right now, there's not much for the player characters to do besides overcome the obstacles I throw in their way. What I mean is that I haven't yet created the space the players need to develop their characters.

Last month, when I was thinking about Eberron and what I might steal from my work on that setting to use in this campaign, I touched on the idea of the Draconic Prophecy–which is prominent in the new setting books as well as pretty significant to my Eberron novel trilogy (which is called *The Draconic Prophecies*!). What makes the Prophecy a great tool for DMs is that it puts the characters' adventures in the context of a larger story–a story that's not just about them, but about the whole history of the world. It gives them some inkling of what's come before, lets them know that their deeds are significant even when they're low-level characters going through their rites of passage, and points them toward the truly epic destinies that await them.

When I created my campaign handout a couple months ago, the opening paragraphs started to give a sense of that sort of larger story. Reading that, my players know that they're adventuring in a place with a significant history:

✦ A long time ago, something was bound in the earth. Its binding made the rise of the last great empire, Nerath, possible.

✦ A hundred years ago, that something escaped. Nobody really knows what the thing was. The people in town who are old enough to remember the event can't describe it.

✦ The land bears the scar of this event. Greenbrier Chasm–the site of our first adventure–is where the creature tore its way out of its prison. The Depravation spreading out of the chasm might be the lingering taint of its presence, or a harbinger of its return.

For the start of the campaign, that's enough–enough to give the players a sense that they're playing a part in something that's more significant than just the troubles of a little village. As the campaign

progresses, though, I need to make sure that I build on that sense until the players understand that their characters are participating in the greatest events of the age, and actually shaping the fate of the world.

The Rite of Passage: By the time the characters are finished with their first adventure in the dark recesses of Greenbrier Chasm, I want them to know that fate has something in store for them. This could be as blatant as giving the characters some kind of vision, or having someone read them a verse of some ancient prophecy that seems to concern each of them specifically. I might actually go that route in some campaigns, but I have some other ideas.

I've already sketched out the idea that one of the player characters is connected to the old crazy priest of Pelor, Jander. Jander sends this character into the chasm's dungeon with a dusty ritual scroll and components so that the character can perform the rituals demanded by the ancient prophecy, connected to the solar eclipse. What the character doesn't know until the ritual is complete is that the prophecy has more to say about the person who performs the ritual. Jander has always suspected that this character might be the figure of prophecy, but the completion of the ritual proves it.

The Keepers: Another observation I made in thinking about Eberron last month is that this campaign is missing villainous organizations for the characters to come into conflict with. Before I get into the real villains, though, there's another idea bouncing around in my brain, inspired by the 1999 Brendan Frasier version of *The Mummy*, of all things. The Internet tells me that the character I'm thinking of is Ardeth Bey (played by Oded Fehr), a member of the Pharaoh's sacred bodyguards, the Medjai. He begins as an opponent to the protagonists, then joins forces with them to stop the mummy.

So I want a fairly sinister organization connected to the ancient prophecies. Perhaps it was founded at the birth of Nerath to ensure that the imprisoned aberration remained bound in its prison, and has spent the last hundred years trying to figure out what to do in the wake of its monumental failure. Perhaps a hundred years ago it fulfilled its purpose by helping the aberration escape, and it has spent the last century trying to atone for what seems to have been a catastrophic mistake. The trick is to create an organization that is sinister but not villainous, shady but not high on the player characters' list of things to be exterminated.

The possibility that intrigues me is that one of the characters is a secret member of this organization. That character might be at odds with the rest of the party at times, but hopefully will side with them in the end. That situation is ripe with dramatic potential! But it also serves to tie a second character into the larger story that's going on in this campaign.

This organization has the potential to also link other characters into the story, if this idea works out: I'm thinking of asking each player to describe one time in the character's childhood when he or she had a very close brush with death. That'll be homework between some of the earliest sessions. I'll take those brief stories and add some details. And fairly early on, I'll reveal that this organization was actually responsible for most, if not all, of those brushes with death. The players will slowly come to realize that some group of people wanted them all dead while they were still children—in order to prevent them from fulfilling their destinies.

I'm not positive yet how this all fits together. I might need a second organization behind the attempted child assassination, to make sure the order that one character belongs to isn't too clearly evil.

Tower Watch: In my sketch of a campaign arc, I penciled Tower Watch in for adventures in the mid-heroic tier. The bulk of that time will be a diversion from the aberrant theme of the campaign, but at the climax it will all start to fit together. At the top of the tower that gives the ruins their name, the characters find an ancient observatory, along with fragmentary notes (perhaps scattered throughout the dungeon) relating to the solar eclipse and the ritual in Greenbrier, as well as a description of a comet called the Dragon's Tear, which appears in the sky every 27 years. The comet's last appearance, they'll eventually figure out, was almost 27 years ago, setting the characters up for an exploration of Firestorm Peak in a few months' time. (They might also figure out, eventually, that Greenbrier Chasm opened 108 years ago, when the comet was visible in the sky.)

The Society of the Sanctified Mind: I discussed using this psionic-focused organization from *Lords of Madness* as a scholarly order dedicated to Ioun, who is also a god of prophecy. Perhaps clues in the observatory at Tower Watch indicate that a member of the Society was the author of the notes the characters found there, and that leads them to seek out a current member of the Society, perhaps in Silverymoon. In Silverymoon, the bastion of learning, the characters do find a member of the Society and learn more about the prophecy, but they also run afoul of a cult of aberration worshipers, and I'll use that to get them to Lake Town where they'll confront that cult—the next adventure in my sketched-out campaign arc.

That just about covers the heroic tier, which seems like a good start on making sure the players know that there's a story behind all their various adventures. Next time, I'll give some more thought to the villainous forces at work in this campaign—not just the horrible monsters that must be slain, but the all too human servitors, cultists, and schemers that the characters and their players will love to hate.

Postlude: The Idea File

Just about every time a new box of *Star Wars Miniatures* appears on my desk, I think, "It's too bad D&D doesn't have a race that looks like Wookiees."

We've made a lot of cool Wookiee miniatures, and the wonderful thing about Wookiees (is Wookiees are wonderful things!) is that they're much lower-tech than most of the other races of the Star Wars universe. Their miniatures look like they'd fit right at home among the dwarves, elves, and dragonborn of a typical D&D party.

I don't know that we'll ever publish an official race that looks like Wookiees, but that doesn't mean we DMs can't include them in our campaigns! Remember that one of the jobs of the Dungeon Master is to steal extensively. Why not adapt Wookiees from the *Star Wars RPG* and bring a similar raceto your D&D game? I don't know that they feel right in Greenbrier, but pulling together the basics of the race is easy enough. For our purposes, we'll adjust them a little and rename the race and their language to prevent players from getting confused.

WOGEN RACIAL TRAITS
Average Height: 6' 6" - 7' 6"
Average Weight: 300-350 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Strength, +2 Constitution
Size: Medium
Speed: 6 squares
Vision: Normal

Languages: Common (understand, but can't speak), Shyriiwook (1)
Skill Bonuses: +2 Athletics, +2 Intimidate
Strong Will: You gain a +1 racial bonus to your Will defense. (2)
Wogen Durability: When you spend healing surges outside of an encounter, add your Constitution modifier to the hit points you regain with each healing surge you spend. (3)
Wogen Rage: You can use ***wogen rage*** as an encounter power. (4)

SILVERYMOON

Now that the 4th Edition *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* is out, I have a concise summary of the city of Silverymoon, which I planned to steal for the major city of the area near Greenbrier. Here's the text describing the city, adapted for use in this campaign:

SILVERYMOON
City of Renown; Population 40,000
Silverymoon is the Gem of the North, a center of learning and a symbol of greatness. It is a beautiful place of ancient trees and soaring towers, with curving lines and garden plantings adorning every nook and balcony. Aerial steeds carry riders across the skies, magic and learning are revered, music and laughter echo in the streets, and the city is celebrated for its fascinating shops brimming with maps, books, art, and items of esoteric lore.

Silverymoon boasts a conservatory of music, a great library, parks, and castlelike residences of noble folk. It boasts a prominent temple to Ioun, and the great University of Silverymoon has grown up around that temple to become the foremost institute of learning in the region.

The city's army, the Knights in Silver, patrols the area immediately around the city, keeping the roads safe for merchant caravans traveling to and from the city.

Wogen Rage **Wogen Racial Power**
As your foe draws blood, you howl with fury.
Encounter
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You become bloodied
Effect: You gain temporary hit points equal to one-half your level. Until the end of the encounter or until rendered unconscious, you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls.

1. Language is actually sort of tricky. You're not really playing a wogen if you're speaking English at the gaming table, are you? Although 4th Edition D&D sharply cut back on the proliferation of languages in the game, giving wogens their own language seems pretty important. They should be roaring and growling, not speaking Goblin or Primordial. The Han Solo of your party will have to choose Wogen as a "choice of one other" language, or else take the Linguist feat.

2. Like the eladrin's Will bonus, this helps compensate for the fact that the wogen is getting two ability score bonuses in the same pair—Strength and Constitution both help determine Fortitude. The Will bonus is linked to the flavor of *wogen rage* (which is very similar to the D&D 3E barbarian rage): An angry wogen is hard to control or dominate.

3. Compare this to the dragonborn's Draconic Heritage. This isn't quite as good, since it applies only outside of an encounter. You might do just as well to give them Draconic Heritage, especially if you don't have dragonborn in your campaign.

4. This is closely related to the longtooth shifter's racial power, but it gives temporary hit points at the outset instead of regeneration for the duration. And it's a free action triggered when you become bloodied, rather than a minor action you can only take while you're bloodied.

About the Author
James Wyatt is the Lead Story Designer for D&D and one of the lead designers of D&D 4th Edition. In over seven years at Wizards of the Coast, he has authored or co-authored award-winning adventures and settings including the Eberron *Campaign Setting*, *City of the Spider Queen*, and *Oriental Adventures*. His more recent works include *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft*, *Cormyr: The Tearing of the Weave*, and *The Forge of War*. His third Eberron novel, *Dragon Forge*, was released in 2008.

Let Player's Manage Themselves Part 3

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND

During the last couple of months, I've been outlining some strategies on how you can help get your players to manage themselves rather than you having to do it.

This month, we are on the last section of my four points on the subject—managing the personalities in your group.

I hate to say this, because this group of articles has been about pointing out subtle ways for you to let your players manage themselves rather than placing the burden on you as the DM, but in this aspect of game troubleshooting, you have the most responsibility. There is just no way around it. As the DM, you are the de facto leader of your group. In many ways, your players will look toward you (whether they realize it or not) to set the tone for relationships in the game. And because of that, how you treat players will often determine how players treat one another.

That said, there are a few very basic, easy strategies that have always helped me juggle the personalities in my group. In many ways, these are not things you have to do, per se, but ways that you should behave. While they are all relatively straightforward, each one takes a bit of practice and a good amount of self reflection on your part. Don't beat yourself up if you flub the first time. I don't always get them right, and I've been trying for years. But I always try, and over the years I've had more success than failure.

Game with People You Like, Like the People You Game With

When it comes to the personalities of the people in your game group, there is one simple and basic principle to keeping your game run smoothly—always game with people you honestly like. Not people you tolerate. Not people who tend to annoy you but share your interest and passion for gaming. People you really like. It seems so simple, and it really is, but it is often overlooked. Sometimes there's pressure from folks you honestly do like to put up with people you don't. Sometimes there's this idea that the local gaming pool is so shallow that you have to endure folks that drive you nuts just so you can play.

Don't give into these pressures. Nothing will ruin a campaign faster than having to deal with people you don't like.

The flip side to this is that a successful D&D campaign is a long-term, close relationship. This group of people will be spending a good deal of time together for months, if not years, and conflicts are bound to occur. Even our best friends, significant others, and siblings (especially siblings) really annoy us from time to time. Don't sweat the small stuff. Don't let petty rules arguments turn into long and pointless debates. Give your friends the benefit of the doubt, and be both patient and generous—after all, you like these people! Foster an environment where playful ribbing is encouraged, where exploration of rules issues is supported, and where house rulings come out of consensus and reasons, rather than a sense of arbitrary dictation or snap frustration over a debate. The respect that comes through an honest sense of friendship is the glue that keeps a D&D game going. After all, you're playing this game to have fun, not to create more drama in your life. You get enough of that with school, work, and family. Save the conflicts for the dungeon!

Lastly, and this is very important, make sure to socialize with your players outside of the game. This can be as simple as having dinner after the game, or making sure that you attend a player's holiday party. Help players out with real life problems when they come up, and share funny stories about the week before. D&D is a game about heroes working together to overcome challenges in a dangerous world of action adventure. This works best when a group of friends come together to build those stories. Fostering friendships is one of the best benefits of playing D&D.

Let Diverse Personalities Shine

Like the roles in an adventuring group, your game group is comprised of people that have different strengths and weakness. Some people are casual players, but gregarious. Others are scattered, but creative and love a good story. Others are organized, but can be rigid in their outlook and ideas on party organization. Recognizing these differences can

be just as important as realizing that some of your players love combat, some love in-depth roleplaying encounters, and others look forward to puzzles and traps.

Sometimes it's easy to get frustrated at these little personality differences, especially if they seem to run counter to your own quirks. Don't get frustrated. Learn to understand the diverse personalities that inhabit your group, and use them in different ways to move the game along.

Let the organized person keep track of experience points, the magic item pool, and treasure. Give them the lead when it comes to checking character sheet math, or creating a list of character watch, marching order, or other party modus operandi. Giving them these tasks focuses their ability in productive ways rather than relegating them to the role of "annoying bossy member" of the group.

Let the creative person do the game sum ups before and after the game, or on your campaign website. I've found that often they see the game in interesting and refreshing ways that other members (including you) don't. Their focused input usually adds depth to your game, and drives their creative impulses in the right direction. Sometimes these people are artists. I once had one particularly talented illustrator actually create comics after the game session. There's nothing like seeing your game through the eyes of a talented artist!

Let your more causal, but more socially-inclined players, keep track of the game and social schedule. Many times these players will keep track of who misses which game, or keep the conversations about play going on email and message boards. You can also give them the responsibility of looking into and organizing outside events for the group. From paint ball to hiking, to getting together to see the newest geek flick, these players can be indispensible social planners.

Keep in mind that a few people in your group won't require any management at all. These stalwart souls tend to be very causal about the game, but that's not a bad thing. They show up, they game, and they have fun. Don't think that you have to give these gems a task to focus their energy. They make your job easy.

D&D is not about winning and losing. It's about storytelling and high adventure with high risk and reward.

Be Fair

This seems simple, but I know but it can be difficult. It's only natural to have favorites and show bias. Your boyfriend is one of the players, or your roommate, or your brother. Maybe you get to talk to one or two players more than others, brainstorming character hooks or story ideas. Sometimes the squeaky wheel gets the grease. That one guy in the campaign always seems to get the magic items he wants because he always asks for them ... or complains loudly when he doesn't. Maybe it's not magic items, but second chances on your part when the dice grow cold and things look deadly (we all fudge to some extent...and sometimes we should). But the trick is to keep things fair. This goes for treasure distribution, stage time, and even character death.

I had a conversation with a friend of mine a few weeks back about the fact that in my game the entire party gets the same amount of experience points, and that when a character dies and the player decides to bring in a new character, he or she comes in with the same experience points as the rest of the party. He saw that as fundamentally unfair—after all, didn't the player whose character died lose in some way? Wasn't I saying that everyone accomplished the same amount of victories even if a player didn't show up for that week? Shouldn't I "punish" those who didn't show up or who let their character's die?

No. Frankly, that just dunderheaded.

Alright, maybe dunderheaded isn't fair. I mean, I'm talking about fairness here (see I told you I don't always entirely succeed at my own principles).

But hear me out. D&D is not about winning and losing. It's about storytelling and high adventure with high risk and reward. It's about getting together with your buddies and having a good time. If someone has to miss a game because they have to visit the in-laws, isn't that punishment enough? They missed out on fun that weekend! I've found that over the years, a character death is dramatic enough. There's no reason to punish the entire group by making that player fall permanently behind the rest of the group's advancement. It's not like you are going to have a make-up game, right? After all, if that character is less effective, it not only diminishes the fun for that player, if diminishes the effectiveness of the entire group.

The fair and right thing to do is make sure that each player has an equal chance to affect the game. The rules go a long way toward doing that, and this is a chief subject of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, for a very simple reason: The game is supposed to be fun. You're not creating some tense piece of post-modern performance ritual, you are not creating a world that actually exists somewhere (or could exist somewhere); you're creating instances of fun. Anything in your game that fights the fun—for whatever reason—should be discarded, and posthaste.

When you create a sense of fairness with the players, the players will reciprocate with you and with one another. Player paranoia becomes healthy suspicion, stress become dramatic tension, D&D becomes enjoyable without being apprehensive. It might seem like a small thing, but I've seen a number of game groups disintegrate without a moment's notice because a DM discarded any sense of fairness. When you're fair, your players will trust you. When you're fair, they are more likely to have fun.

Whew! Well, we're finally done with that one. Next month, we'll move on to a subject that's particularly near and dear to my heart: the fine art of DM adjudication. In other words, how you can make the best decisions in your game. Notice that I said best, not necessarily correct, because there's a difference.

Until I unveil that little nugget, I'll leave you with this interesting quandary from the mailbag.

The Mail Bag

I Don't Run a Game, I Lead an Army

I recently started to DM a campaign with ten player characters. The original idea for the campaign was that the characters form a small commando group for an army preparing for a defensive war, and I thought that a ten-man party was appropriate and would be effective in some of the situations small commando groups sometimes face.

My problem at the moment is combat. One round takes between 30 and 60 minutes, which means most players are waiting between 25 and 55 minutes between actions. Some of them are paying close attention to what everyone else is doing and actively making suggestions or jokes about the situation, but others are starting to drift and lose interest. I'm seeing that glazed-over look and I'm not terribly happy about it.

I'm partial to the idea of a ten-man group, but I'm sensing that many of my players would be much happier in smaller groups, perhaps splitting the party into two five-man groups and see what mischief those smaller groups can handle. Do you know of any way we can speed up combat, or increase player activity, or am I best off just letting the group split?

–General John

I'll be honest, my first inclination is to tell you to split that group into two smaller ones. I've run games that large, and I don't consider it fun. But I get the impression that you really want to run a group this large. So I am going to pretend like my first inclination is not an option, and give you some hints on how to get your big game running faster.

You want to do two things: Get organized and reduce the number of dice rolls. I've talked about many tricks for table organization in the past, but one of the simplest ways that you can organize a game this large is to us average (some might call it "passive") initiative. Have the players add 10 to their initiative modifier, and then sit in initiative order around the table. You can do the same thing for the monsters, and then run the encounter by moving clockwise around your play space, and inserting monsters turns when they act.

In addition to the organizational advice we've discussed here in the past few months, that should help you some, but you might want to take rolling for average a step further, and try average damage rolls. Everyone still rolls attacks, but they deal average damage except when they score a critical hit (where you can either have them inflict damage normally, or average the critical dice). I've always believed that D&D moves at the speed it takes someone to roll dice, so keeping the attack die roll, while using average damage, should almost cut the time for each turn in half, assuming that the player doesn't have look up rules during his or her turn.

If these still aren't doing it, consider taking average on ability and skill checks. These come with a greater abstraction, and some potential playability issues, but they are worth considering if you really want to speed up the game.

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when **Stephen Radney-MacFarland** came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games.

Once that RPGA guy, Stephen is now a developer in RPG R&D where he doesn't create the traps... he just makes them deadlier. He also teaches a class on roleplaying design for the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

Clog Our Mailbox!

Your game needs saving, or you have some game saving advice of your own? Drop us a line at dndinsider@wizards.com with the worlds Save My Game as your subject line. Maybe next month we'll talk about your problem or feature some bit of advice that comes from the mailbag.

You can also join the game saving conversation on our message boards, but piping in on the discussion of DM tips and tricks. Stephen makes it a point to visit and chat with those who agree and disagree with him.